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MISTAKES IN RELIGION EXPOSED:

AN Sam^l. Miller.

# ESSAY

ON THE

# PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS.

*By the late Rev. H. VENN, M.A.*

AUTHOR OF THE COMPLETE DUTY OF MAN.

We have made LIES our refuge, and under FALSHOOD have we hid ourselves ISAIAH XXVIII. 15.

Nec extra conscientiam bonam charitas; nec extra fidem conscientia bona; nec fides extra verbum Dei. Hæc qui dissolvit, a scopo aberrat, & pro veritate, vanitatem amplectitur.

BEZA.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR R. OGLE, 295, HOLBORN; OGLE AND AIKMAN, EDINBURGH; AND M. OGLE, GLASGOW.

1807.

E. Blackader, Printer, Took's-Court, Chancery-Lane.

# INTRODUCTION.

MISTAKES in Religion, pass with many for matters of small importance, because they are supposed to have little or no connexion with our present or future happiness.

The following pages directly oppose this tenet, now become extremely popular, by a winning appearance of candor and free enquiry, which its patrons never fail to plead in favor of it.

To expose, therefore, the favorite conceit, "that men are in no danger of de-"struction from embracing false doc-"trine," is become needful, and will serve as a proper Introduction to this Essay.

Were the conceit then true, that Mistakes in Religion are matters of small importance, it must be true also, that a well-informed judgment would be of no more value towards obtaining acceptance with GOD, than one blinded by the spirit of error. Good principles and bad must no longer influence the mind according to their nature, and therefore should lose their names. Ignorance would stand upon a level with knowledge, and false conceptions of GOD, with those which are just: for no preference can be due to one above the other, if the practical influence of both be the same.

More glaring absurdities than these are, cannot be named. The notion, therefore, from which they necessarily follow, must itself be false.

But the mischief this libertine opinion does, equals its absurdity. What can pour contempt on *all Religion* more, than to suppose mistakes about it are of

no consequence? Will any man study to know the mind of GOD, after he is persuaded ignorance in that respect has no hurtful tendency? or value the Bible, when the truths contained in it, instead of being accounted principles of life and action, are degraded into speculative points, which we may neglect without guilt, and deny without loss or danger to the soul? Or what power of commanding faith in the doctrines He hath revealed, can be said to remain with GOD, when authority over conscience is supposed entirely to rest on every man's own apprehension of truth, not on his written word?

A conceit so pernicious, we may be sure must contradict the judgment and practice of CHRIST and his Apostles. Accordingly we find, they are absolute in requiring men to receive the truths they taught as necessary to salvation. "Except ye believe that I am He, ye

" shall die in your sins," saith the LORD.
" Preach the Gospel to every creature.
" He that believeth and is baptized,
" shall be saved: He that believeth *not*,
" shall be damned." The practice of the Apostles was founded upon this decisive tone of their divine Master. Hence, when certain teachers at *Philippi* deviated from the faith, St. *Paul* calls them *dogs*, to excite universal detestation of their errors, and charges the church to beware of them. He commands the churches of *Galatia* to look upon them as *accursed*, who preached any other Gospel to them, than that they had heard from his mouth. And he places heresies in the same dreadful predicament with adultery, as a work of the flesh. St. *Peter*, perfectly harmonizing with his brother Apostle, expresses himself in as strong terms on this head. " There shall be false teachers," he says, " among you, who privily shall bring in " damnable heresies, denying the LORD

" that bought them, and bring upon " themselves swift destruction."

St. *John* commands the faithful, not to receive into their houses any teacher who should bring with him any other doctrine, than he had taught them himself; charging them " not to bid such a one " GOD speed; lest by so doing, they " should become partakers," not of *his speculative mistakes*, but " of his evil deeds."

It is evident from these passages, (a few of many which might be alledged) that CHRIST and his apostles were extremely jealous to preserve the doctrine they taught uncorrupted, as a matter of the last importance. No art can reconcile their declarations, warnings, and commands, to the conceit, that Mistakes in Religion have little connexion with our present or future happiness. Nor is it possible to reverence their judgment and practice as an infallible precedent,

unless we regard these declarations, warnings, and commands, as decisive, that false doctrine is poison to the soul, and to be sound in the faith, necessary to acceptance with our Maker.

The authority and practice, therefore, of CHRIST and his Apostles, will justify every well-meant attempt to prove the malignant nature of Mistakes in Religion.

Every one exposed in this Work, is fairly deducible, I apprehend, from the Prophecy of *Zacharias:* a part of scripture highly deserving peculiar attention; because it certainly contains that very system of divinity, which the Baptist, from his tenderest years, was taught to believe: for it is against all reason to suppose the father would ever instil any other doctrine into the mind of his child, than what he published to the people himself, when full of the holy Ghost.

This Prophecy I call a *System* of Divinity, because it contains several articles

of religion, which, like the foundation and superstructure, bear to each other the nearest relation, and must stand or fall together.

*Zacharias*, for instance, teaches, that we are all in the hands of our enemies, and those that hate us. Hence our ruin must be certain, unless some Deliverer, more mighty than our foes, undertake our rescue. In the words of the Prophecy, the Horn of Salvation raised up to visit and redeem us, must be the LORD Himself. And when our guilt and our pollutions are so great, what can inspire men, intimidated on this account, with full confidence in the Horn of Salvation? Nothing less than the Promise, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, that such trust shall be crowned with final conquest over every foe; or, in the words of *Zacharias*, that "the people of GOD "being delivered out of the hands of "their enemies, shall serve Him without

" fear, in holiness and righteousness be-
" fore Him all the days of their life."

Further; it follows from hence, that this plan of salvation provided for fallen man, and displaying every perfection of GOD in the highest degree, well deserves to be the principal subject of all prophecy, as the knowledge of it is the appointed means of promoting holiness and peace amongst men in every age. *Zacharias* expressly affirms these several truths, which stand inseparably connected together. So that without any force of interpretation, or human comment, we find the chief articles of the Christian faith in these dictates of the holy Ghost published by the Baptist's father.

Several religious mistakes, besides those exposed in this Essay, might have been justly deduced, I am very sensible, from this distinguished part of scripture. But those selected, had the preference, from long observation of their bad effects, in the course of more than twenty years at-

tendance on the business of my profession, first in *London*, and its near neighbourhood, afterwards in the large and very populous Parish of *Huddersfield*.

Regular practitioners in the medical art are allowed to have knowledge in the nature and cure of bodily diseases, from seeing much of both. Can it be just to deny to spiritual physicians the same advantage respecting diseases of the soul, when their appointment is only to study its welfare? Strange indeed! if much thought, joined to much conversation on the grand subject of Religion, with young and old, rich and poor, ignorant and learned, devout and profane, should not give sufficient opportunity of discovering with certainty what are the principal mistakes which defeat the end of our instructions!

Much intercourse in this way, must teach all who are desirous of knowing, what mistakes some fall into by being wise in their own eyes; what sooth others

of licentious life into a fatal security;—What fill Youthful minds with prejudice even against the Prince of peace; Moralists with contempt of Him; Formalists with obstinate confidence in their blind devotions, and Antinomians with the most detestable presumption.

To create a salutary dread of such pernicious errors, is the design of this Work. And *very few* mistakes stand here exposed, but such as all earnest Christians, who ascribe their whole salvation to the Grace of GOD, and the redemption that is in JESUS, will agree are pernicious; yet I never met with a treatise containing a formal confutation of them.

Should any person of religious sentiments directly opposite to those maintained in this Essay, think it worth his while to remark from the press, on what he may call my own gross prejudices, it is proper he should know, that I shall gladly retract any mistake I may have fallen into, with due gratitude to my

corrector, but intend no reply in vindication of my principles: because if a book cannot defend itself to the Public, it will be in vain for the author to attempt doing it. Besides, how very rare is a controversy in which either respondent or opponent keep from impertinent observations, disdainful irony, mean prevarication, and even personal abuse? So that nothing can be more disgusting to those who love peace, or more hurtful to the cause of CHRIST, than disputes in divinity, as they are managed, almost on every occasion.

The Reader of these pages, it is presumed, will not find them written in the spirit of controversy: their sole design being to prove the baneful influence of notions contrary to the doctrine believed by the universal church in every age. This indeed is often done with some warmth against the mistake, not the person whom it deceives. And those who are ready to take offence at *such*

warmth, seem to forget, that *men* and their *principles* are very different things, which ought by no means to be confounded together. Every sentiment of compassion and love is due to their persons, who even "trample under foot the "blood of the Son of GOD," but detestation is no less due to their errors. Were there no power of thus separating abhorrence of fatal mistakes, from ill-will towards those who hold them, then the best Christians must be deemed most uncharitable, at the instant they prayed for their murderers with all the ardor a tender mother would ask the life of her child. Since at that very instant. the martyrs declared in the most affecting manner, that the mistakes of their persecutors were absolutely fatal; because they suffered death itself, sooner than give the least countenance to them.

Indeed love to GOD and man require, that errors of a pernicious nature, should be exposed always with warmth both from

the pulpit and press, for the more earnestly conclusive arguments are urged, the more deeply will the cause we plead be impressed. Another objection may be made to this, with all works of a serious nature: It may be said to give a melancholy picture of the state of mankind, who are living in general under the power of fatal mistakes. But has not the general state of mankind, in every age, been a most afflicting consideration to every thoughtful and benevolent Christian? Can you believe "there is a GOD who "judgeth in the earth, who is of purer "eyes than to behold iniquity;" or that they only "who *have done good* shall "come forth to the resurrection of life," and see the general state of mankind in a pleasing light? Next to their own offences and depravity, nothing has ever so much imbittered this world to the greatest lovers of the human species, as seeing the headlong pursuits in which the multitude are seeking death, eternal death!

What sighs, what tears in secret before GOD, have they not, after the example of CHRIST, poured out, because men are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness! What fervent intercessions have they not offered up in their behalf, who have reproached them at the same time for their uncharitableness! What hard and long struggles have they gone through, before they could cease from quarrelling with the determinations of infinite wisdom, out of love to their perishing fellow-creatures! How would they wish, were it lawful, which they know it is not, that every individual, whatever he has been or done here, might escape the wrath to come. On the contrary, the purity of GOD, the honor of his law, the end of his government, the truth of his word, the interest of his upright creatures for ever exclude all hope of happiness from them "who love dark-"ness rather than light;" and, in the language of *Isaiah*, "hold fast a lie in

" their right hand." And in this case, what does good-will to men, or faithfulness to GOD demand from us ? Surely not insinuations of impunity to the unbelieving and disobedient. Not, but to alarm them, if possible, by proving, that neither numbers, nor fashion, nor presumption, can destroy the eternal connexion there is in the nature of things between unbelief and misery, hell and incorrigible wickedness. In no other way, can effectual opposition to widespread immorality and error be made; because the greater necessity there is from the prevalence of both to insist on their *final issue*, doubtless, the more melancholy must the general condition of mankind appear.

Is nothing to be feared beyond the grave, let men think, speak, and act as they please? No longer then ascribe unto GOD the perfections of his nature, or profess belief of a Resurrection, both of the just and the unjust. But if men

can be saved only through CHRIST, in the way of faith and obedience, then true benevolence must be inseparable from earnest contention for Christian faith and practice; must animate us openly to oppose every deviation from either, as full of danger; and engage us to join with intrepid zeal for the doctrine and precepts of CHRIST, fervent prayer to Him, "who openeth the eyes of the "blind, and bringeth prisoners out of "their prison," that all who err may be led into the way of truth, and knowledge increase to make men wise unto salvation.

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AN

# ESSAY

ON THE

# PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS.

## CHAP. I.

*On the Character of* ZACHARIAS.

THE spirit of prophecy, one peculiar glory of the Jewish church, was entirely withdrawn for some ages before our Saviour's birth. It ceased with *Malachi*, who closed the canon of ancient scripture, and was not again vouchsafed for more than three hundred years. Judge then, what a subject of discourse, surprize and joy, it must have been among the true Israelites, when it was publicly known, that GOD had once more raised up

a prophet amongst his people: That *Zacharias*, a priest long distinguished for piety, and excellency of life, was become, by miracle, a parent in his old age, his wife being old also, and full of the holy Ghost, proclaimed the approaching appearance of the Messiah.

Such was the striking prelude, appointed to prepare the Jews for the reception of CHRIST, who by signs and wonders from his birth, was powerfully proved to be the LORD.

Yet *Zacharias*, excellent as he was, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of GOD blameless," greatly offends on this occasion. For though assured by an angel, that he should embrace a son of his own, he could not believe the marvellous promise. His unbelief is punished upon the spot. In a moment he loses his speech and his hearing, and is cut off from all sweet intercourse with his friends, till the very fact, which he deemed incredible, came to pass. Nine whole months he remained a most affecting spectacle; a monument of the sin of doubting divine declarations, which we are bound to honour, by believing apparent

impossibilities to be no obstacle to the execution of GOD's purposes.

But what are the chief of saints before sudden and violent temptations? How lamentably do they discover, no less than others, the power of corrupt nature, and stain their characters which appeared almost without a spot before! This teaches us, that the best have ever need to pray—"lead us not into temptation." Otherwise, if left to ourselves, splendid privileges will only expose us to greater shame. Like *Zacharias*, when *Gabriel* came from heaven to assure him he should be the father of one of the most excellent of the prophets, we shall fall into disgrace, and incur the displeasure of GOD.

At length when the illustrious babe was brought to be circumcised, his father's mouth was opened, his tongue was loosed, and, full of the Holy Ghost, he prophesied, saying,

LUKE i. 68.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.*

TO redeem, signifies to purchase the deliverance of captives, by paying down a ran-

som-price, through which alone they obtain their liberty. None, therefore, but the wretched and enslaved, as common sense teaches, can need this mercy. Since the Israel of GOD then are visited, and redeemed, it follows, that they are naturally in a most miserable condition. The word of truth affirms, and universal experience proves, they are so, till they receive the benefit of redemption.

Before this blessed hour of deliverance, infernal selfishness, and enmity against the truth and government of GOD, possesses them. Sensuality, pride, impatience, anger, hatred, malice, and hyprocrisy, by turns, as temptations occur, are manifested in their tempers and conduct; making them often a burden to themselves, mischievous to others, and always displeasing to GOD.

This totally corrupt and wicked state, I allow, is frequently coloured over with fair appearances of good humour, honor, social virtue, and the exterior of religion; sufficient to sooth self-love, and deceive spectators, no better than ourselves; yet the infallible Judge pronounces, that "we are by nature children

of wrath," *Eph.* ii. 3. and have in us a "carnal mind which is enmity against GOD," *Rom.* viii. 7.

Compared with this natural character of man, the unsearchable riches of grace shine to the highest advantage. For, instead of destroying his people, when in a state so guilty, so detestable, the LORD GOD hath visited and redeemed them.

## CHAP. II.

*On the Mistake of asserting Man's native Innocence.*

THIS doctrine, taught by *Zacharias*, proves their error who conclude men are born innocent and good, as *Adam* was created. Such a supposition impeaches the prophets, apostles, and CHRIST himself, as slanderers of mankind, and blasphemers of GOD. For they unanimously assert the ruin of us all, as a race of sinners by birth. Upon this melancholy truth, they found the absolute necessity

of redemption; which indeed must sink into nothing but a very violent and absurd metaphor, if we are not in a fallen, lost condition. For what absurdity could be grosser, than to affirm, that men naturally upright, in peace with GOD, fully possessed of power so to continue, or to recover themselves if they did sin, were yet *visited* in such a state, and *redeemed* from it?

Besides, you can no sooner embrace this delusion, that man is not fallen, and lost, than you will take offence at the name of a *Redeemer*. You will grow jealous of the high honours constantly paid to him, and instead of being thankful for his explaining more clearly the nature of religion, and revealing a future state, which you allow he has done, you will feel a disposition to quarrel continually with him, and his apostles, for speaking in the manner they do of his ever-blessed person, his glorious work, and salvation.

Observe further, the fatal effect of this mistake. Instead of being animated with love to GOD, and his service, by inestimable benefits vouchsafed already to a creature vile and sinful: you can receive nothing

better from GOD on this side the grave, than a set of moral rules, with a declaration that the due observance of them may possibly be rewarded in another world, whilst much more probably your violation of them may destroy your soul. In this view of things, what certain blessing is there granted at all?

How much more beneficial and consolatory is the doctrine which *Zacharias*, with all the inspired writers, teaches! The Redemption of sinners by the LORD GOD, from a state equally infamous and miserable—which challenges the most devout and thankful acceptance, as the chief of all the mercies of GOD; that every believer in JESUS, whilst he obeys and adores his precepts, as an infallible prophet, might triumph also in the greatness of his salvation, as a complete Redeemer.

## CHAP. III.

*On the Redemption of the Church.*

THE people of GOD, are those, whom the Father gave to CHRIST—a multitude out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue—in number as the sand upon the sea-shore. They are distinguished by this title of highest honour, on account of GOD's special favour towards them, their devotedness to his service, and love of his truth. All these were redeemed by the blood, and made righteous by the obedience of CHRIST. When he expired on the cross, he delivered them from the wrath to come—He bruised the serpent's head—He made sure, in the way of holiness, the salvation of every member of his mystical body, the church.

The following scriptures, in their natural, obvious sense, establish this glorious truth. "By the one offering of himself, this man "(CHRIST) for ever perfected them that "are sanctified," *Heb.* ix. that is, separated by the choice of GOD, and consecrated to his

service. "This man, after he had offered "one sacrifice for sin, sat down on the right "hand of GOD, from henceforth expecting "till his enemies become his footstool." In grateful remembrance of this complete redemption, the church is represented as breaking forth into the following joyful strains,— "We have a strong city, salvation will GOD "appoint for walls and bulwarks." The ministers of CHRIST are charged to animate the faithful, in the midst of all their sufferings, with words which breathe nothing but assurance of victory—"Comfort ye, com- "fort ye my people, saith your GOD. Speak "ye comfortably to *Jerusalem*, say unto "her, her iniquity is pardoned—her warfare "is accomplished—she hath received of the "LORD's hand, double for all her sins," *Isa.* xl. 1, 2.

In so perfect a manner, hath the LORD GOD of *Israel* visited, and redeemed his people.

This doctrine exposes their *mistake*, who fancy the excellency of the gospel consists in ascertaining a future state of rewards and punishments, and promising the aids of grace

to succeed our good endeavours. Did the gospel contain *no more* than this, it must still prove insufficient to make obedience to the precepts of CHRIST either delightful, or practicable. Because from our very constitution, we all pant after present gratifications, and are seduced to depart from our duty by the prospect of present pleasures—which if religion will not afford, we shall continue to despise it, however it may be our future interest not to do so. We shall delay giving up ourselves to the service of the LORD, till a time of sickness or old age, whilst we conclude so much more may be enjoyed from forbidden pleasures at present, than we shall receive from obedience. This is, in fact, the grand prejudice against religion in the hearts of the young and lively, the prosperous and noble. A prejudice insurmountable, so long as religion is represented to them, *principally* as precept on GOD's part, and obedience on ours—promising no higher joys to us *here*, than self-applause for having done well, and hope on that ground, such as it is, of being finally happy in heaven. For what in their eyes who pant for present joy, is all

this, compared with brilliant assemblies, and sensual delights, or the great privileges of wealth, power, and titles? Do not these things notoriously captivate men of all ranks and ages, till they find in religion an immediate spring of better gratification? But this cannot be consciousness of our own virtues, because in the best, their virtues bear no proportion to their faults, as all know who are not blinded with pride. Neither can it be in the expectation of happiness beyond the grave, because our fears will be stronger than our hopes, till we are filled with peace and joy, as the primitive christians were *in believing*.

Some object therefore, most excellent, and to an high degree at present beneficial, is needful; the possession of which will at once extinguish all eager desire of forbidden joys, by affording better itself. Exactly such an object is the LORD—not considered as a law-giver, but as a friend and father—as emptying himself of his original glory, and becoming poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich for ever—dying for us on the cross, and now reigning omnipotent

on his eternal throne, giving to his faithful people assurance of perfect happiness with himself in heaven.—Here is enough to make us exult.—Beauty in the object surpassing all the eyes ever saw—benefits flowing from it in never-ceasing streams, above all the ear ever heard—and delight in the increasing knowledge of both, beyond all the heart of man can conceive.

As such an object, the Redeemer proposed himself: and his apostles afterwards in this light set forth his glory. Witness his own declaration to one of the vilest of women, which had instantly such an effect upon her, that she commended him to the whole city, after she had believed in him herself. "JESUS said unto her, He that drinketh of the "water that I shall give him, shall never "thirst; but the water which I shall give "him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into *everlasting* life," *John* iv. 14. On another occasion, when the Jews were going to stone him, enraged at his making himself equal with GOD, behold, he asserts with a double asseveration, the present and eternal benefits inseparable from true faith

in his name. "Verily, verily I say unto "you, he that heareth my word, and be- "lieveth on him that sent me, hath ever- "lasting life, *and shall not come into con-* "*demnation*, but is passed from death to "life," *John* v. 24. *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John* repeatedly assert the redemption of the people of GOD to be thus perfect. To the christians at *Corinth* the great apostle writes and tells them, "All things are yours, whether "the world, or life, or death, things present, "or things to come, all *is* yours, and ye are "CHRIST'S, and CHRIST is GOD'S," 1 *Cor.* iii. 32. St. *Peter*, teaching the very same doctrine, represents the new birth, as infallibly connected with everlasting salvation, 1 *Peter* i. And St. *John* affirms it when he says, "Behold, now are we the sons of "GOD, and it does not yet appear what we "shall be, *but we know* that when He shall "appear, we shall be like him, for we shall "see him as he is," 1 *John* iii.

Such a *complete* redemption of sinful creatures, is a work in mercy and in grandeur worthy of GOD—a gift engaging the heart, from gratitude and admiration, to re-

joice in paying obedience to him—a gift enabling every possessor of it, to challenge the whole world to produce an equal good—so far from leaving its possessor to envy the forbidden pleasures of the licentious, that it constrains him to wish for their *present* happiness—that it might please GOD, they should become partakers of the nobler delight, which springs up in his own heart, from the knowledge of redemption.

It is evidently then a mistake, of dangerous consequence, to suppose that rules for moral practice, or the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments, constitute the principal excellency of the gospel—because the observance of these rules, which is to be rewarded, cannot be accomplished without some previous manifestation of the love of GOD, great enough to allure and captivate: for men must be won by love, not by terror. But commands to sacrifice our dearest lusts, to hate our own lives, and forsake all, under the heaviest penalties, do not make us love the sovereign power, which dictates in this manner. And to tell us we are only in a state of probation, where all

depends upon ourselves, has no tendency to inspire unreserved confidence in the LORD our GOD; or to make us worship him with alacrity, sing of him, and praise his name. This can be produced only by the discovery of his abundant mercy, and the unsearchable riches of his grace towards us in our first and natural state, which makes our redemption ever appear marvellous in our eyes. "We "love him, because he first loved us, and "sent his own Son to be the propitiation for "our sins." This is the christian's vast obligation to gratitude—this is the cord which binds his heart in devotedness to his GOD.

## CHAP. IV.

### CHRIST *the grand Subject of all Prophecy.*

THE scriptures above quoted affirm, that the eternal redemption of the people of GOD, was obtained by the life and death of CHRIST —He purchased the church with his own blood. So that the heavenly inheritance is

as sure to be enjoyed in due time, by every one of his members, as if they were already enthroned in glory. Yet the way leading to this final consummation of all the designs of GOD's love towards them, is every step through an enemy's country, who are always attacking us—whom we must resist and conquer, or perish.

Lest, therefore, the power, number, and subtilty of our foes, rendered more dreadful by the advantage which they too often gain, should make the christian armies despair, *Zacharias*, after celebrating the Redemption of the church, immediately displays the almighty power, ever exerted in their defence. —" And has raised up an horn of salvation " for us, in the house of his servant *David*."

The horn of an animal, is its weapon for defence and vengeance—its ornament and beauty too. It is used therefore in the prophetic style, to denote the power of the strongest Empires.—In the same sense we are to understand it here. By this image the exceeding greatness of the Redeemer's strength, and the never-ceasing exertion of it in behalf of his church, are signified.

This horn of salvation, being the sole preservation of the saints in CHRIST, must certainly be the glory of the Bible—must appear to the eye of every intelligent reader, the grandest part of the whole, and be exalted from first to last in that blessed volume.

*Zacharias* affirms it is so;—"for when "GOD raised up an horn of salvation, in "the house of his servant *David*," of whose seed CHRIST came according to the flesh, this event was in consequence of frequent predictions;—"As he spake by the mouth "of his holy prophets, which have been since "the world began."

What an honour is here put upon these witnesses? they were men of distinguished sanctity in the judgment of their GOD. They published not the product of their own invention, or private judgment, but the dictates of JEHOVAH, to give us the truest conceptions of his counsels, which we are capable of attaining in our present state. "For "the prophecy came not in old time, by the "will of man, but holy men of GOD spake

"as they were moved by the holy Ghost," 2 *Peter* i. 21.

These prophets, who succeeded each other in a long series of more than two thousand years, spoke with *one mouth.* They delivered an uniform testimony concerning the same grand Personage; gradually unfolding his glories, till he appeared himself on earth, the living original pourtrayed in the prophetic books.

For the business of the prophets, was not only to mark with authority, as messengers from the LORD of hosts, the path of obedience and safety, of rebellion and ruin—not only to comfort with divine promises the afflicted church, and in the name of the LORD denounce threatenings upon the wicked; another most important matter was in their commission—"for the testimony of "JESUS is the spirit of prophecy," *Rev.* xix. 10. They were inspired to delineate *him*, that upon his appearance, all that understood their writings, might cry out with the Baptist—"Behold the Lamb of GOD, "which taketh away the sin of the world!" might welcome his advent with the joyful ac-

knowledgment—" Lo ! this is our GOD ; we " have waited for him, and he will save us :— " this is the LORD (of whom *Moses* and all " the prophets spake) we have waited for " him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his " salvation !"—That all ages of the world might find in them a demonstration that JESUS was the promised Messiah, and adore the exact accomplishment of every prediction in the ancient Oracles concerning him.

A series of prophecy respecting the person of our Saviour, from the fall of *Adam* to the time of *Malachi*'s decease, is at once a full proof of his infinite glory, and the certain inspiration of the Bible. Let us take a short survey of it.

Immediately after that one offence, which was the ruin of us all, GOD was pleased, before the gates of paradise were shut upon our guilty parents, to promise with his own mouth, in mitigation of their distress, that " the seed of the woman (CHRIST) should " bruise the serpent's head." At the distance of a few centuries, *Enoch*, blessed with a vision of his glory, prophesied, saying— " Behold the LORD cometh with ten thou-

" sand of his saints to execute judgment." To *Abraham*, JEHOVAH describes him as an infinite benefactor, " in whom all the nations " of the earth should be blessed." *Jacob* calls him by the name of Shiloh, the peace-maker, " to whom should be the gathering of the nations." Favoured with these notices of salvation, *Israel* abode in *Egypt*, till *Moses*, sent to deliver them, established from GOD's own mouth, a system of religious rites, designed to teach them the work and offices of the Messiah—for the holy Ghost expressly calls the Levitical service, a *figure* for the time then present, *Heb.* ix. 9. to serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.

It was given to lead our views forward to Him who was to come in the flesh, the great high-priest of his church, and the Saviour of it to the uttermost. And to keep alive the spirit of the whole Levitical service, with its true intent, holy prophets were from time to time inspired to describe the grand circumstances appropriated to distinguish CHRIST. His miraculous conception by the blessed virgin—the time and place of his birth—the

miracles he should perform—the reception of his doctrine—the treatment of his divine person—the circumstances of his death, and the glory which should follow from it, both to himself and his church, are all recorded with amazing exactness. So fully did the goodly fellowship of the prophets speak on these things, that when the apostles were sent to preach CHRIST, and convert the world, their sole qualification for the arduous work, in point of knowledge, was to understand what was spoken concerning CHRIST, in *Moses*, the Psalms, and the Prophets.

This scripture doctrine exposes several mistakes in religion.

The *New* Testament, many tell us, is all that Christians *need* to study—or at least ought to regard much *more* than the old. For what reason? Are they not so joined together by divine authority, that he who doth not with equal reverence receive both, can receive neither as the oracles of GOD? Are they not both the dictates of JEHOVAH—"profitable for reproof, for correction, for "instruction in righteousness?" The New Testament continually appeals to the Old.

This JESUS and his Apostles urged in all their disputes with the Jews, to prove that he was the CHRIST. Those therefore who would lop off from the canon of christian scriptures, the writings of *Moses* and the prophets, or insinuate they are of little use to us *now*, either have no good intentions, or know not what they do. Neglect these writings, and where will you find GOD described with such pomp of majesty, and self-evident marks that He is *drawing* his own character? Where, those high claims to uncontrolable dominion over the universe, as his own absolute property and creation, repeated with such emphasis? Where the doctrine of a particular providence so abundantly exemplified? or JEHOVAH's love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity, marked in such a variety of affecting narratives, and at the same time his condescending friendship for his servants, under all their infirmities, so invariably manifested? Where will you find the true character, and glory of CHRIST, expressed in so many charming descriptions of his person, his power, and the blessings of his government? Several of

these interesting subjects are sparingly treated on in the New Testament, because the prophets had insisted upon them before at large. The business of the Evangelists was to prove, by the history of the life of JESUS, that he was the Messiah.—The business of the Apostles, to bear witness of his resurrection, and teach the doctrines which the ancient scriptures contained; which they were able to do, after our Saviour had opened their understanding, and expounded unto them the things concerning himself. But wherever the New Testament was received, immediately the ancient Oracles, able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS, were received also, and Christians were commanded to *study* them. Thus St. *Paul* affirms; that the church of GOD is built "upon the prophets and apos-"tles—JESUS CHRIST himself being the "chief corner-stone," *Eph.* ii. 20. St. *Peter* stirs them up to be mindful of the words, which before were spoken by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour, 2 *Pet.* iii. 2. Is any preference to the New, above the Old

Testament, given in these passages? No, it is a crafty device in those who undermine the Oracles of GOD, to degrade one part of them, under pretence of greater reverence for the other, in order that they may reduce into a very small compass what is allowed to be a testimony absolutely decisive—that so false doctrine may the more easily escape undiscovered. A device, which of late years has proceeded to such a length, that we are now told, the Epistles are not to be regarded, as of equal authority with the four Gospels; any more than the Old Testament to be put upon a level with the New. In plain English, the Gospels only are given by inspiration of GOD.—Those who are practised upon to believe this, will find much less difficulty in getting rid of the Gospels too, at a convenient time, than in proving one small part of scripture is the revelation of GOD—the far greater, only the private opinion of fallible men.

Hold fast, therefore, the faith once delivered to the saints, that "*all* scripture is given by inspiration of GOD." Contend earnestly from love to his name, your fellow-

low-creatures, and the truth, that "GOD "spake by the mouth of his holy prophets "since the world began"—that it is at our peril to despise those writings, or fancy their use to the church in any degree superseded by the publication of the *new* scriptures.

## CHAP. V.

*On the Mistake in preaching Morals principally.*

THE doctrine before us, exposes the mistake of substituting lectures on morality and virtue, instead of discourses on the horn of salvation. For though morality and virtue are truly venerable, and of absolute necessity, yet when inculcated without reference to CHRIST, as their root, support, and sole cause of acceptance with GOD, they deceive and injure extremely—because in this way we are led to conceive ourselves virtuous, without those deplorable defects and pollutions, which in fact are chargeable on the best.

We are led to imagine human excellence sufficient — the sure and only passport to heaven. And this delusion must prejudice us bitterly against several capital parts of scripture, which pour contempt upon all expectations of divine favour, founded on our own obedience.—Hence we shall deny, or wrest those divine sayings, in which CHRIST takes upon himself the whole glory of saving the children of men. And after we are infatuated with the idea of our own excellent virtue, one article of the Christian creed will grow odious, then another—till we shall conclude in the end, that it is much more rational to be infidels, than Christians. For the self-made idol of deists, is a pleasing object to a proud, corrupt mind—allows of human merit and boasting—but the GOD of the Bible requires us to approach him with shame and confusion of face for our defilement, and offences.

An unguarded recommendation of the excellency of moral virtue, to the neglect of the power and grace of CHRIST, has contributed to bring on the present increase of Deism, and revolt from the gospel, much more than

all the formal assaults of its avowed enemies. And Deism is often defended upon this very principle, that the stress laid upon articles of faith in the Bible, proves a public mischief, by drawing off men's attention from personal virtue, and teaching low, disparaging ideas of its worth. Thus a zeal for morality and virtue, which are of indispensible necessity, may be, and very often is so misguided, as to prove fatal to the soul. For whether men will hear, or spurn it from them as an imposition, CHRIST is "the way, the truth, and the "life—no man cometh to the Father but by "him," *John* xiv. 6. "He that hath not the "Son, hath not life," 1 *John* v. 12. though his virtues may be extolled, even as a pattern for imitation. "If any man love not the "Lord JESUS CHRIST, let him be anathema, "maranatha," 1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.

Know then the true standard, by which you must try the spirits—every preacher you hear, and every religious book you read. It should not satisfy you, that virtue is earnestly inculcated, and obedience to the commandments of GOD pressed home, from considerations of his authority, and a judgment

to come—for much more than this is required. You ought to esteem the performance deplorably defective, and the preacher no fellow-labourer with the prophets and apostles, unless he displays the horn of salvation—unless every idol in the human heart, which usurps his place, be thrown down—and all the proud pretensions of self-sufficient moralists, and self-conceited pharisees, be exposed. If a christian preacher or writer treats of morality and virtue in such a light, that no Jew or Turk would find any offence in his work, is there not cause to charge gross ignorance on the preacher or writer with respect to CHRIST? If topics which Jews or Turks would themselves use, are chiefly used by *us* to enforce moral practice, what advantage does the gospel afford in this grand point? They who can hear, or read such discourses without grief of heart, from love to GOD and man, are strangers to what the scripture teaches of the glory of CHRIST's religion; and, were they to cease professing it, would suffer, it should seem, no great loss in their spiritual state.

## CHAP. VI.

*Christ the Redeemer of his Church from the Curse of the Law.*

All the prophets, who with one mouth have spoken of Christ, speak of him as raised up, "that his people should be saved "from their enemies, and out of the hands "of all who hate them." We are born in captivity, and after we recover spiritual liberty, our enemies assault us all our days. Some of these enemies, being invisible, are little regarded, or known by the world. Consequently, when they hear of a horn of salvation, raised up to deliver sinners out of their hands, they know not how to conceive the meaning of such expressions, much more to believe their truth. For if they live in peace, quietness, prosperity, reputation, and a good opinion of themselves, they cannot understand there is any better condition on earth, nor desire deliverance.

Thus pride and ignorance hiding our condition from us, we presume we are safe, when

our real circumstances are deplorably ruinous. The friendly light of GOD's word and Spirit are sent to discover this gross delusion. They shew us where we are, what we are, and what we want. That we are a race of sinners, in base and voluntary subjection to Satan, the world, and the flesh, condemned by the righteous law of GOD, and every moment liable to the arrest of the king of terrors.

Each of these foes, as soon as their power is understood, will be found unconquerable by any might of our own—of consequence deserving eminently the name of enemies—compared with whom, all we naturally dread, as hostile to us, will seem as nothing. These enemies are Sin, the Law, Satan, the World, the Flesh, and Death. But as the law is the strength of sin; as sin is only committed through the instigation of Satan, the world, or the flesh; and death ensues as the penalty of sin; deliverance from the power of these enemies, necessarily includes victory over sin, a victory everlasting. These enemies, therefore, we shall particularly consider, and the

way in which CHRIST saves his people out of their hands.

The first enemy is the Law. Man receiving from GOD a reasonable soul, with all he possesses, is absolutely dependent upon him, and necessarily obliged to obey his will in whatever instance it is made known. The penalty on failing to pay this most rightful homage, is death, the loss of the favour of GOD, and the misery of his displeasure. Thus the angels in heaven, by one act of disobedience, lost all their glory, and are wretched beyond expression. Thus *Adam* in paradise by one offence destroyed himself, and his posterity. The same law, with the same sanction, GOD published in ten commandments, accompanied with all the terrible ensigns of his almighty power, to more than a million of his subjects assembled at the foot of mount *Sinai*; engraving it afterwards with his own finger on two tables of stone. This law, though in itself holy, and just, and good, taking occasion from our sin, slays us. It is become our great accuser and dreadful adversary. It is against us in every attempt we naturally make to escape from its eternal condem-

nation. It is contrary to us, breathing out righteous vengeance against our persons, as offensive to an holy GOD, and guilty before him—spurning all our prayers, our tears, and our amendment, as no more compensation for violating its command, than the murderer's tears, or better behaviour, are for his enormous offence.

The strictness, therefore, of the law, in its demands, and the weight of its sentence upon transgression, render it insupportable to sinners—an accuser which stops every mouth, brings in the whole world guilty before GOD, and as vile criminals condemns us all to hell.

Out of the hands of this enemy, the horn of salvation was raised up to deliver his people. "For GOD sent his own Son, made of "a woman, made under (that is, subject to) "the law, to redeem them that were under "the law," *Gal.* iv, 4, 5. "The strength of "sin is the law, but thanks be to GOD who "giveth us the victory, through our Lord "JESUS CHRIST," 1 *Cor.* xv. 56, 57. The process, or several steps necessary to be taken, in order to accomplish this deliverance, are worthy of everlasting admiration. For

this great purpose, GOD's own Son began his life in the flesh, in perfect purity, not conceived in sin, as we do ours. "Foolishness "is bound up in the heart of a child," rooted and rivetted there, *Prov.* xxii. 15.—but the holy JESUS grew in wisdom, as in stature. In manhood we indulge our evil appetites, and live to self—He did always the things which pleased GOD, and fulfilled all righteousness. We are found full of faults, whenever our conduct is severely scanned. and the accuser of the brethren, might his condemning voice be heard, can always alledge with truth a thousand charges against us. JESUS challenged his eagle-eyed foes to convince him of sin, and told his chosen friends immediately before he suffered the last assault from Satan, "the prince of this world cometh, but "hath nothing in me," not the least taint of corruption to work on, or slightest stain of evil to lay to my charge. Because, whatever the law enjoins of external obedience, or spiritual worship, as due from man to GOD, was in all his actions, in all his words, in every temper, in every imagination of the thoughts of his heart.

Thus did GOD's own Son, the Lord of all worlds, fulfil the law, in the form of a servant, that he might save his people out of its hands—that in the very manner of their redemption, and acceptance with GOD, through his divine obedience performed for them, the law might appear in the eyes of all intelligent creatures, more glorious than if no offence against it had ever been forgiven.

This doctrine corrects a mistake often made by many in forming an estimate of the obedience of CHRIST.

The rising sun in summer is not so charming to an eye of sense, as his life to a mind which can admire spiritual excellency. So complete an union of every lovely quality, without one single flaw, has compelled even his blasphemers to do him honor. And it is common to expatiate on the consummate perfection of his character, as a copy for imitation. But here many stop. This indeed gives him pre-eminence above the most admired of men, yet is not half his due—for the scripture places the sinless life of JESUS in an infinitely higher light—not only as a perfect pattern, found in no other man, or a

necessary qualification to make atonement, but as a work of most efficacious beneficence—of a kind absolutely singular, surpassing beyond all comparison every other service the almighty ever received, and reaching in its saving virtue, through all eternity. For no creature can *transfer* the benefit of his own performances, since perfect obedience is due from every creature, on his own account, to GOD, by an indefeasible right: but the unrivalled glory of the life of CHRIST, consists in this peculiarity, it is the righteousness of GOD: by which myriads of sinners to the ends of the earth, and the end of time, are made righteous. To them his righteousness is imputed, because performed by compact upon their account, for their salvation; accepted as such by the Father, and deemed so really theirs, that the righteousness of the law is said to be fulfilled in them, because fulfilled by CHRIST, who is their Surety, and with whom they are one.

Observe what abounding evidence the scripture affords of this truth. Look so far back as *Abraham*. The first time believing is ever mentioned in the Bible, *imputed righte-*

*ousness* is mentioned too. For when he believed in the LORD, *IT*, that is to say, what was promised—what his faith received, and on which it terminated, even CHRIST, was counted unto him for righteousness, *Gen.* xv. 6. This instance the apostle brings in proof of justification by CHRIST—which would have been impertinent, if not CHRIST's righteousness, but *Abraham*'s act of faith, had been the cause of his acceptance with GOD. Many passages in the Psalms extol this divine righteousness as the glory and boast of the church—but when GOD would comfort his people with a more full revelation of the office and work of the Messiah, he established this doctrine by a most majestic proclamation. JEHOVAH beholds all the nations of the world under condemnation for sin, but instead of executing vengeance upon their guilty heads, he calls from heaven with this sweet voice of mercy—"Look unto "me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth "—for I am GOD, and beside me there is "none else. I have sworn by myself, the "word is gone out of my mouth in righte-"ousness, and shall not return:—unto me

"every knee shall bow, and every tongue "shall swear, surely shall one say, In the "LORD have I righteousness, and strength," *Isa.* xlv. 22, 24.

That this LORD, in whom the church exults, from assurance of possessing in him both righteousness and strength, is CHRIST, appears plainly from the application of these words to him twice in the New Testament; and that the righteousness here intended, is for justification before GOD, is no less plain, because the concluding sentence of this proclamation, again affirms—"In the LORD "shall all the seed of *Israel* be justified, "and in him shall they glory."

As our everlasting welfare depends on the grace revealed in this truth, the inspired writers frequently assert it. *Jeremiah*, next in succession after the above proclamation, and well acquainted with it, prophecies, that the very name by which CHRIST should be adored is this, alluding to the proclamation, "The LORD our righteousness," *Jer.* xxiii. 5. The angel appears to *Daniel*, and tells him, Messiah was to come at such a fixed time, not only to finish trangression, to make an

end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, *but to bring in everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24.—Our Saviour exhorts his disciples to seek in the first place the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, the latter being the title to the former—and the office of the holy Ghost, he affirms, is, "to convince the world of righteousness." —St. *Paul*, who did not receive the gospel he preached from man, nor was taught it, but by revelation of JESUS CHRIST, after his kingdom was erected, insists on the imputed righteousness of CHRIST—he stiles the gospel, "the power of GOD unto sal- "vation," because "*therein* is revealed the "righteousness of GOD," *Rom.* i. 17. which a little after, in the same Epistle, he declares, is, "by faith of JESUS CHRIST, "unto all, and upon all them that believe," *Rom.* iii. 22.

This declaration I conceive, after great pains used to explain its meaning away, does clearly assert the obnoxious doctrine of imputed righteousness. For to say the essential righteousness of GOD, is unto all, and upon all who believe, is nonsense—or

that this expression means faith, or justification by faith, must be nonsense too, because it is plainly *distinguished* here as the object of faith, and the cause of justification. Cease from torturing the text, and according to its plain sense it must mean the imputed righteousness of CHRIST, who is GOD. Neither can this be called a foreign righteousness, because it is imputed only to those who are members of CHRIST.—But the members of CHRIST, according to divine constitution, are one with CHRIST in the covenant of redemption, and in the communication of life from him their head—An union no less real, than that which subsists between fathers and their own offspring—It is, therefore, often represented under that image—"Behold me, and the "children thou hast given me."

Further, St. *Paul* declares, that the perdition of the Jews, who rejected CHRIST, was from their ignorance of the righteousness of GOD, and refusal to submit to it—He affirms, that "CHRIST is made of GOD "unto his church, righteousness; and the "church is made in him, the righteousness

"of GOD."—He states at large the way by which death entered, and by which salvation is obtained; that "as by the offence "of one, judgment came upon all men to "condemnation; even so by the righteous-"ness of one, the free gift came upon all "men, unto justification of life—for as by "one man's disobedience many were made "sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall "many be made righteous."

After this, what more could this apostle add in proof of his favourite doctrine? Only that proof which he did. I mean, his pouring contempt on all the love his heart felt towards GOD, on all his usefulness towards men, and on every excellent grace which he in so eminent a degree possessed—On all this he pours contempt, counting it no better than loss, or dung, to merit his justification.—In *this* light he rejects it with disdain, that "he might win "CHRIST, and be found in him; not having "his own righteousness, which is of the law, "but the righteousness which is of GOD "by faith."

Perfectly harmonizing with his brother

*Paul*, St. *Peter* addresses the church, as a society highly favoured in having obtained like precious faith with him, through, or rather in the righteousness of GOD our Saviour. Taking all these divine declarations together, they are surely sufficient to prove the mistake of depreciating the life of CHRIST, by assigning to it no other use and influence, than as an example; or a qualification to become a sacrifice for sin. We are warranted by them, to consider every part of the Saviour's obedience as beneficial to his people, and imputed to them—to contemplate Him as living and labouring every day for so many years in human flesh, that in their behalf, "grace might reign through righte-" ousness unto eternal life, by JESUS CHRIST " our Lord."

## CHAP. VII.

*On the Atonement.*

THE perfect righteousness of CHRIST, imputed to his people, was necessary, in order that GOD might justify them, with ample honor to his own law. And the infliction of the penalty annexed to disobedience on the offenders' substitute, was no less necessary to make manifest the evil of sin, the divine indignation against it, and reconcile in their exercise towards his people, his justice and mercy, his truth and holiness.—"For it became him, by whom are all "things, and for whom are all things, by "making the captain of their salvation per-"fect through *sufferings*, to bring many "sons unto glory. And because the chil-"dren are partakers of flesh and blood, he "also took part of the same, that through "death, he might destroy death, and him "that had the power of death, that is the "devil," *Heb.* ii.

For these reasons, CHRIST, after paying perfect obedience to the law, died a death absolutely without parallel. All, besides himself, die, because they are sinners. He, because sin was imputed to him, and punished both in his body and soul. By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD, yet according to his own voluntary engagement, JESUS endured all that variety of misery, which sin deserves. He endured poverty, shame, and torturing pain of body and mind. He died under loud execrations, which were poured out upon him from a thousand tongues—He died under the curse of the law, transfixed by the sword of eternal justice to his cross. Prodigies then met together, which were never seen before, nor will be seen again—From different causes, heaven, earth, and hell seemed to conspire together to increase his torment, far above all comparison. For this we know from infallible authority, "that the father spared "him not—that it pleased the father to "bruise him—that he suffered, the just for "the unjust, bearing our sins in his own "body on the tree."

By virtue of this death, the full import of it, being known and trusted in, the people of GOD are delivered from the menaces of the law in their consciences. They become dead to it by the body of CHRIST, being "married to another, even to him, who was "raised from the dead, that we should bring "forth fruit unto GOD," *Rom.* vii.

By this means, their obedience to him, becomes pure in its intention, and in its extent reaches to every commandment—a service, not from sons of the bond-woman, but of the free—not paid for wages to a master, but from affection to a beloved father. Not as compelled by that awful threat, "Do this and live, offend and perish;" but from a heart devoted to his service, and penetrated with a sense of his high and holy authority.

## CHAP. VIII.

*On the Necessity of preaching the Law.*

THIS doctrine of the redemption of the church from the curse of the law, through the death and righteousness of CHRIST, proves it is a great mistake to suppose the law is not to be preached to Christians.

"If any man speak, ought he not to speak "as the Oracles of GOD?"—But they insist on the special grand design of the law. They tell us it was given to make sin abound, and appear exceeding sinful—to shut up as prisoners all under sin, and thus render the news of salvation by the LORD, transporting to our hearts. The Oracles of GOD do peremptorily assert, that the Holy Ghost, the giver of life, strength and comfort to the soul, is received, "not by the works of the "law," (the doctrine of acceptance with GOD, by personal obedience) "but by the hear-"ing of faith"—of salvation through faith. They pronounce those to be in the way to

perdition, who seek righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law, even though they have a zeal for GOD. They divide mankind, not only into moral and immoral, religious and profane, as Philosophers and Pharisees are wont to do, but into two classes unknown to either of them—those who are of the works of the law, and therefore *cursed;* and those who are of faith, and therefore *blessed* with faithful *Abraham.*

From these passages (and many of like import might be cited) you may see how fully the Oracles of GOD treat of the law. What marvel then, if upon ceasing to preach the law, preaching loses its usefulness! When the law is not explained, it is impossible that sermons, however moral, or serious, should ever teach scriptural ideas of the evil of sin, or the nature of pure obedience to GOD; or of the necessity of redemption by CHRIST.

On the contrary, open the nature, use and design of the law, it will soon prove itself an engine of divine appointment, and admirable efficacy. By laying "judgment to "the line, and righteousness to the plum-

"met," it sweeps away the refuge of lies, under which sinners, of every sort, take shelter. It brings all who hear what the law saith, into a salutary despair of ever escaping the wrath to come by personal obedience, and so makes the horn of salvation always appear the same necessary defence, and glorious blessing, which the scripture affirms he actually is.

Those who omit preaching the law, suppose themselves justified in doing so, by limiting what is said on this great subject, to the Jewish ceremonial law. A grosser mistake, ignorance itself scarcely ever made, though many great names have long pleaded in its behalf. For can you call the ceremonial law, the law written, and engraven on two tables of stone? Can you call it spiritual, or apply it to bring in the *whole world* guilty before GOD? Yet these are the specific qualities belonging to that law, of which the apostle treats. Or can you think, that when he says, "the *law* is *good* if a man use it *lawfully*," immediately naming the many *immoral* offenders which it condemns, that he had any respect at all to the ceremonial law?

I am not ignorant, that it is urged also by those eminent preachers, who never apply the law as the ministration of death, to the consciences of their hearers, that Christians are now under a milder dispensation, which requires sincere, not sinless obedience. But in this assertion there is much fallacy. For by Christians must be meant either nominal, or real ones—if only nominal, they are under the law, seeking to enter into life by keeping the commandments, and depending upon their own obedience in conjunction with the merits of CHRIST, to save them. They are therefore of the works of the law. To rescue them from this delusion, the perfect standard of duty, with its sanction, must be set before them—They must be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and be convinced how much they are found wanting; and he who does this most faithfully, to destroy all their false confidence, will prove their kindest friend.

But if by Christians under a milder dispensation than the law, are meant real ones, who in the nervous phrase of scripture, "have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the

" hope set before them;" they are not only under a milder dispensation, but under grace itself. Yet before they had access into that grace, wherein they now stand, they were every one of them, with the great apostle, " slain by the commandment," or they would not have fled to CHRIST for refuge—through the law they became dead to the law, and are the very persons, who prove to demonstration, both the necessity and success of applying it to the conscience.

The increasing desertion of our churches, beyond the example of former ages, is confessed, and is indeed alarming*. Should not then all those teachers, who from Sunday to Sunday see no increase of their hearers, or good effect of their instructions, change their doctrine? Should they not at least make the experiment, however strange it may appear, whether proving that all men are con-

* This desertion of our churches is imputed to the increase of Methodism, as it is called—But without cause, since it is most observable in places where there are no Methodist teachers—On the contrary, in every parish where the law is scripturally taught, both an increase in the number and attention of the hearers is evident beyond dispute.

demned for sin—without a possibility of being ever accounted just before GOD, through their own virtue, will not be attended with better success? Whether rich and poor will not be more affected, by full proof that they are absolutely lost, unless the horn of salvation delivers them, than by leaving them to think their own goodness will comfort them here, and open the kingdom of heaven to them hereafter? Whether a more conscientious obedience will not be produced, when we see ourselves continually indebted for life to CHRIST alone, as the children in the furnace were to a miracle of goodness, than can spring from considerations of profit and loss, according to our own conceit of a progress, or decline in virtue?

## CHAP. IX.

*Peace of Conscience towards* GOD, *not the Reward of imperfect Virtue.*

THE doctrine that the church is redeemed from the curse of the law, by CHRIST's own obedience unto the death of the cross, proves

the mistake of supposing peace of conscience towards GOD is the reward of virtue. Good people, it is constantly said, have a right to be perfectly free from all fears about the future, from the pleasing review of a well-spent life. From hence the vain and arrogant fancy, that even the wretched fragments of what has only some semblance of virtue, in their own conduct, entitles them to its reward. Therefore they grow still more proud, and presumptuous—for since no perfect rule of duty is fixed, the vain and arrogant always conclude themselves tolerably virtuous upon the whole, and through this soothing error, stifle every rising conviction of their danger.

Those of a modest and serious turn, it bitterly distresses, driving them often to distraction, and even to death for refuge: because there are many persons, it is certain, much troubled in conscience, who the world judge need not be so at all. They are just and upright in their dealings, of a kind and generous spirit, devout, and careful to avoid all known offences.

Now that persons of so high a character, should not possess this certain reward of vir-

tue, peace of conscience towards GOD, appears very strange. Men ignorant of the truth, always with great confidence impute this to lowness of spirits, weakness of mind, or a superstitious cast, which involves every object it beholds in gloom. But where there is no weakness of mind, bodily distemper, or superstitious cast, this is found to be the case with many persons—And the true cause of their misery, is from having believed peace of conscience towards GOD, is the reward of virtue, as we all naturally do, still forgetting that it is *perfect* virtue alone, which is the parent of peace towards GOD. Not finding, therefore, this peace, but on the contrary, fear and guilt, they conclude he is angry with them. This anger they endeavour to avert by better obedience, yet still find no comfort; nor can they, while they seek it in a way derogatory to the obedience which the LORD himself performed. For as this perfect obedience is the sole cause of our justification before GOD, the sentence of condemnation must remain in the conscience (if we make a true judgment of our state) until CHRIST be all our peace and hope; be-

cause the utmost efforts to lead a good life, must leave us still destitute of the righteousness which the law requires. We may persevere in prayer—we may fast—we may give alms—we may watch over every word, and every thought, and even agonize to keep the commandments—thousands have done as much—yet after all, we shall offend in many things.

Whilst men, therefore, seek peace with GOD, from consciousness of their own goodness, they remain under the curse of the law, which they are always breaking. So long then as their earnestness for salvation continues, and this error is believed, they must be in fear. They can find no rest to their souls, till instead of labouring to attain it by works of righteousness, they seek it by faith in CHRIST. Could the answer of a good conscience towards GOD be really enjoyed in any other way, the scripture would be falsified—because it constantly ascribes this inestimable blessing to the blood of the cross, and to CHRIST's resurrection, as the surety and head of his church—calls it his peace, given to his disciples, upon their look-

ing to him for pardon, in despair of help from any other quarter.

Matter of fact, the subject of daily observation confirms this doctrine. Who are free from distress of conscience, before CHRIST has made them free? Those only who abridge the commandments of GOD, or are daring enough to think, he ought not to require more, than they find themselves inclined to do. Or those, who in the dotage of self-love, smitten with admiration of their own beauty, see in themselves nothing amiss. —Not a single person, endued with the smallest degree of humility, and earnestly striving to do his duty, but lives in bitter bondage, and frequent distress, till the knowledge of the Prince of peace gives comfort to his soul.

To advise, therefore, persons of good character, when troubled in conscience, to take confidence from their good life—to tell them they can have no cause to fear, since if such worthy people as they be, are not safe, what must become of all the world; is a fatal mistake. Neither by any means press them to

join in the circle of the gay, and the merriment of the thoughtless, as a cure for their melancholy. Such counsel has already destroyed its thousands. For the persons, to whom these means are prescribed, having strove in vain thus to shake off the pain of a guilty conscience, when they are directed to repeat the same methods as their only remedy, must conclude their wound incurable. No marvel then, if strangling should be chosen, rather than life.

To remove their distress, a totally different method must be used. They must be taught, that they are much worse, and more sinful, than they suppose themselves to be—that all they have ever done, or can do from the motives which have governed them, is wrong—because the thought of making peace with GOD by their own obedience, is an insult which pride casts upon his law, high treason against his crown, and frustrates his grace. They must be told, that a painful sight of their spiritual state, is designed in great mercy to undeceive them—to bring them to a confession, that they are lost, unless the atoning blood of CHRIST be received by

them, as all their salvation. Consciousness of guilt, they must be assured, will ever pain them, sensible as they are now become of the great extent of their duty, so long as they expect peace of conscience from personal holiness, not from CHRIST's obedience, which has magnified the law, vanquished Satan, and redeemed the church, to the great glory of GOD, through all eternity. They must be directed to consider with great attention and prayer, the scriptures, designed to overthrow the pillars of self-righteousness, and to bring all flesh upon an absolute level in point of justification before GOD—and when the utter impossibility of obtaining true peace of conscience towards Him by personal obedience is perceived, they will begin sincerely to apply to the great Physician, the merciful Healer, whose office, pleasure, and glory it is, "to bind up them that are broken in "heart, and give liberty to them that are "bruised."

Generally speaking, these things are new to persons troubled in conscience, at least point out a way of relief, which has not been tried by them, and which upon trial is sure

to succeed to the establishment of their souls in comfort.

I have often seen the worst consequences follow from giving any other advice to persons laboring to get peace by personal obedience, and the most pleasing ones in every case from confession of sinfulness, and reliance on the blood of CHRIST to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

## CHAP. X.

### *On the Power and Devices of Satan.*

A SECOND enemy, into whose hands we are fallen, is Satan. For though many affect to treat the agency, and even existence of this execrable spirit with derision, yet the scripture, from the beginning to the close of man's eventful history, speaks much and awfully of both. Not to admit these passages as full proof, is to make the Bible itself contemptible for the violent absurdity of its phrases.

Leaving, therefore, these modern Sadducees, if they will, to sport themselves with their own deceivings, let us attend to the Oracles of GOD, and understand from them what have been, and still are the wiles and malicious activity practised against man, by that old serpent, the devil.—If we enquire of the Word of GOD who seduced our first parents, robbing them of their original righteousness, and paradise? Who afterwards debauched their posterity to prostitute themselves to idols, over the face of the whole earth; to shed in sacrifice before them rivers of human blood*? Who dared repeatedly to attack in person our incarnate GOD, instigated *Judas* to betray, the Jews to crucify him, and after his ascension to persecute unto death his members? To each of these questions the Oracles of GOD reply—Satan did it all:—Who, for thus practising upon the children of men, to their eternal ruin, is branded with the names of tempter, deceiver, liar, accuser, and murderer, and charged

* *De Solis*, in his history of the conquest of *Mexico*, tells us, that the *Indians* sacrificed in that city every year, twenty thousand lives to their accursed idol.

with "going about like a roaring lion, seek-
"ing whom he may devour." Though these detestable names and qualities belong to him, he is nevertheless "the prince and god "of this world, working in the children of "disobedience, to do the lusts of him their "father;" who, for this reason, are called "children of the wicked one," and doomed to suffer for their sins in that world of woe, "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Thus full is the account in holy writ, not only of his existence, but his empire over us, his activity, and too successful malice in completing the misery of man.

As an accuser, and adversary, he impeaches the people of GOD of high crimes against the law, urging from thence the necessity of their condemnation, as rebels with himself. To invalidate this claim, CHRIST expired, "blotting out the hand-writing of ordi-
"nances, which was against us, which was "contrary to us, and took it out of the "way, nailing it to his cross—By this very "act spoiling principalities and powers of "their grand plea against his people, and "making a shew of them openly; (as thus

" defeated in their malicious accusation,) " triumphing over them in it," *Col.* ii. 14, 15.

The prophet's vision beautifully exemplifies this interesting truth—" He shewed me," saith *Zechariah*, " *Joshua* the high priest, " standing before the angel of the LORD " (*i. e.* CHRIST) and Satan standing (as the " accuser in Jewish courts of judicature was " wont to do) at his right hand. And the " LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke " thee, O Satan, even the LORD who hath " chosen *Jerusalem*, rebuke thee: Is not " this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now " *Joshua* was clothed with filthy garments, " and stood before the angel, as a person ac- " cused and charged with sin—And he (the " LORD) answered and spake unto those " who stood before him, Take away the " filthy garments from him—and unto him " he said, Behold, I have caused thine ini- " quity to pass from thee, and I will clothe " thee with change of raiment," *Zech.* iii. 1—4.

What is represented so forcibly in this vision, as the way of delivering *Joshua* the

high priest from Satan's malicious arraignment, is expressly declared to be the way, in which all the ransomed of the LORD are saved. Their adversary, the accuser of the brethren, follows them, as it were, into the court of judgment, where, to his everlasting confusion, he hears this challenge proclaimed in their behalf—"Who shall lay any thing "to the charge of GOD's elect? to prose- "cute them at his bar, as guilty? It is GOD "that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? "It is CHRIST that died, yea rather, that is "risen again, who is even at the right hand "of GOD, who also maketh intercession for "us," *Rom.* viii. 33, 34.

But Satan seeks our destruction, not only by impeaching us of high crimes against the law, and honor, and majesty of GOD, but by various subtle temptations, practising upon us to this moment, as he did at first upon our original parents. Trace the wiles by which he prevailed over them. Did he not beguile *Eve* to imagine, that GOD would not avenge their impious offence, and that death should not follow upon disobedience? "Ye "shall not die," said the serpent. By sugges-

tions of the same blasphemous kind, he still leads sinners captive at his will. How often does he deceive men to imagine, sin is not the cursed, detestable thing, which the word of GOD constantly affirms it to be? that our Maker will never punish the indulgence of our natural passions, to which we are so strongly excited by that very situation in which he hath placed us? that the gate of heaven is not so strait, nor the way so narrow, that only a few, out of many, should find it? that all will not be lost, who die condemned by the verdict of the Bible? Entertain more honorable notions of GOD, be more kind and liberal in your sentiments—be assured all will be happy—the universal parent has taken effectual care, that vice shall ever find its own sufficient punishment here—no need can there be for the shocking idea of damnation.—It is but the pillar of priestcraft.

By this soothing temptation—this Syren song—licentious ears grow quite ravished; and flattered, like *Eve*, with the insidious promise of security, "Eat, and thou shalt

" not die :" they give the reins to their lusts, rebel, and in their rebellion perish.

From this snare, the LORD, the horn of salvation, delivers his people, by giving them firmly to believe the words he has spoken unto them. True faith at once possesses their minds with just, indelible conceptions of the evil of sin, the essential holiness of GOD, and his avenging justice. Through this conviction, not the effect of education, or customary assent to the truth, but of divine teaching, they baffle these suggestions of Satan, as CHRIST himself repelled his assaults, with—" Thus it is *written.*" By this means also, all the wild dreams about infirmities, temptations, *&c.* as if they would indemnify us though we commit iniquity, vanish away. Sin is known to be the poison of the soul. Consequently a principle of self-preservation excites us to seek deliverance from it—to take alarm at its approach, and feel painful apprehensions when we have been overcome by some surprize, or violent assault.—After much experience of this kind, the understanding is more enlightened, GOD is more known, the nature and qualities of

sin clearly discovered, and its tyranny becomes hateful to the soul.

Where the case is not thus (such terrors being unnecessary with respect to many)—where the heart like *Lydia*'s, is sweetly opened to receive divine counsel, and just ideas of the love of GOD and CHRIST take place from the first awakenings—still believers in him are preserved no less securely from the wiles of Satan, than if the sharpest pangs, for fear of perishing, had wrung the heart. Both those who have suffered much terror, and those who have felt none, are equally persuaded, that "the wages of sin is "death"—every prohibition against it a tender mercy—its service base, like the life of thieves and ruffians; and obedience to GOD in all things infinitely desirable.

Though this knowledge does not preserve his people from ever offending at all, yet it keeps them from ever being at peace with sin. They groan under its first motions in the heart, and complain against themselves for what others account no evil—it is the vexation of their lives that they are no more holy.

In this manner the subtilty of Satan, as a tempter, liar, seducer, and murderer, is defeated—and the faithful are saved out of his hands.

The other grand artifice by which the old serpent at first erected, and still upholds his empire, is by offering delicious flattery to our pride. "Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good "and evil," dazzled *Eve*. The towering thought of independence, an amazing exaltation, even above her high condition, caught her in Satan's snare. What is tantamount to this he insinuates to her posterity—You have powers within yourself, sufficient to acquire wisdom, to practise virtue, and to attain happiness.—By industry in cultivating your natural faculties, moderating your passions, by self-command and self-improvement, your mind shall brighten incessantly with new charms *, and you shall be conscious they are all your own acquisition. Though indeed you must stand indebted to another for your creation, you shall be beholden to yourself

* See Mr. *Hume*'s Moral Essays, or any of the Socinian writers—who abound with this self-sufficient language.

alone for moral excellency, and rectitude of conduct, which is the whole of man.

Away then with the supplicating knee, the atonement, and Intercessor for transgressors —Away with the aids of grace, and the dictates of revelation. What are these but engines, used by knaves to maintain themselves in affluence and authority. Be assured, where mystery begins, religion ends.

Such artful suggestions of man's native dignity, the powers of reason, and our own sufficiency to perform our duty, naturally captivate all, who were before smitten with admiration of their own understanding, good life, and good heart. And these high thoughts which exalt themselves against the knowledge of GOD, and create implacable hatred of his truth, are ascribed upon the best warrant to Satanic influence. "For if our gos-"pel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; "in whom the God of this world, hath "blinded the minds of them that believe "not, lest the light of the glorious gospel "should shine unto them," 2 *Cor.* iv.

But this snare, so sure to catch the vain and arrogant, cannot take the people of GOD

—because their own experience, is a living proof, stronger than a thousand arguments, of the falshood of such high thoughts. They feel inconstancy, weakness, ignorance, folly, defilement, and corruptions, notwithstanding their unfeigned desires, their fervent prayers, their watchfulness, self-denial, and labor to become what they well know they ought to be. Light makes manifest. Wherefore the greater their progress is in copying the perfect example set before them, the quicker discernment and sensibility they possess of their own manifold deficiencies—Of consequence, the nearer they approach to heaven, the deeper is the conviction, which they feel, that it is wholly owing to the free grace of GOD, the inspiration of his Spirit, the sacrifice of his Son, his everlasting love, intercession, and immutable promises, that they have not already perished, and shall not be condemned with the unbelieving world.

Hence whatever services the LORD's people perform, whatever excellent qualities adorn them, they abhor, as sacrilegious, the first risings of self-complacency. They watch

with godly jealousy, against their native propensity to be great and good in their own eyes; and thus resisting the devil, in his capital artifice, they are saved out of his hands.

After this deliverance, it seems good unto their heavenly Father, that many of the heirs of glory should still feel the fiery darts of Satan, and be called to terrible conflicts with this invisible foe. He is permitted forcibly to suggest the most horrid thoughts, deceiving those who are assaulted with them, to regard them as the offspring of their own minds. In the closet, and at church, when they would ascribe unto GOD the honor due to his most holy name, they are often violently tempted to believe there is no GOD, or to suspect his word is falshood, or to arraign his attributes. Yet these hideous suggestions, from the pain they cause, shew plainly from whence they come. They are like the charges of a perjured villain against the innocent, which prove nothing but the malice, and daring impudence of their accuser.

Was not the heart delivered from Satan's dominion, there would be no painful feelings, no sighs and tears on this account. His children can hear GOD's name blasphemed, his attributes arraigned, his being questioned, and be merry in the midst of it all; if they do not join themselves in assaulting the eternal throne. Wait, therefore, thou afflicted and tossed with tempest, on account of these blasphemous suggestions. They are permitted, like other temptations, to prove thy impotence to withstand Satan in thy own might, to exercise thy faith and try thy patience. In due time thy enemy shall depart from thee, as he did from the great Captain of thy salvation, who was in this very matter tempted, as thou art, and therefore well knows how to sympathize with thee, and to succour thee. Be of good cheer—though this trial be grievous indeed, little danger is to be apprehended from this quarter, in comparison of what we stand exposed to from sensual appetites, from love of money, praise, and power.

## CHAP. XI.

*On the Mistake of supposing Heaven will be open to all Men;—and of some native Power in Men to save themselves.*

THIS account from scripture, of the cruel artifices of Satan, proves two dangerous mistakes, often vehemently propagated, under the notion of much more rational religion than ancient Christianity; and with high pretensions indeed of being *liberal*, in opposition to it. Many of these liberal gentlemen affirm, that heaven is open to all men. Others, who have not *yet* got quite so far, teach, that without the blood of CHRIST, and the Spirit of grace, men can redeem themselves by their own repentance, after they have been very wicked;—and when they have not, may rest assured of salvation from the mercy of GOD, by making themselves, through their own moral character, the objects of his delight. Yet the first of these opinions is as old as the fall, and has ever been a main pillar of Satan's empire. Stronger possession in our minds, than it na-

turally gives him, he cannot desire—because when once we are so deluded as to believe heaven is open to all men, the difference between good and evil instantly becomes too dim to be seen by *natural* men in an hour of temptation, or at least too little interesting. Why should they sacrifice a favourite passion, lose, or suffer for conscience sake, they will say, when they may indulge, and be safe? Need I produce any other proof, that the notion of a mercy in GOD, which dispenses with faith and holiness, is a device of Satan's, his enemy, and ours? Beware therefore of all pleaders for the impunity of the disobedient, or their salvation, who die in their sins. Sooner esteem those friends to society, who would abolish the penalties of the law, the prisons of justice, and the sword of the magistrate; than those who say, or insinuate, there is not in GOD an everlasting antipathy to all evil, and an unchangeable purpose to turn all the wicked into hell. Did only fallible teachers assert the avenging justice of the supreme governor of the world, this mistake would not be so flagrant. But ponder and weigh the truth.

All those holy prophets, by whose mouth GOD spake from the beginning of the world, who denounced his desolating judgments upon *Babylon*, *Tyre*, and *Nineveh* of old—upon the unbelieving Jews, their devoted city, country, and posterity, foretelling their present unexampled condition, sixteen hundred years before the event:—These men of GOD, *all* of them warn the disobedient of approaching vengeance, if they will go on still in their wickedness.—The most compassionate JESUS utters that solemn exhortation, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is "the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth "to destruction, and many there be who go "in thereat."—He immediately adds—"Be-"ware of false prophets (or teachers) who "come to you in sheeps cloathing," meek, mild and gentle, teaching no such shocking doctrine, as that few will be saved, and many perish;—"for inwardly they are ravening "wolves," greedily bent on serving their own bellies:—"Ye shall know them by their "fruits."—CHRIST's apostles after him declare, that "there is a resurrection of the "unjust to damnation."—All these witnesses

agree in affirming the perdition of the ungodly, in words so very plain, that no serious Christian ever questioned their meaning punishment insupportable.—When these things are so, what a fatal mistake must it be to depend upon a mere notion, a *wish* of your own, a wish, the vile offspring of infidelity and love of sin; in contradiction to such abounding evidence, and infallible testimonies of the wrath of GOD revealed from heaven against all workers of iniquity? Be assured, the scripture can no more be broken, than GOD himself can cease to reign. All the evil, as well as all the good, which is therein foretold, must be accomplished upon its respective object. But should unbelieving, impenitent men escape their threatened doom, dying in that character, the scripture would be proved false, no less, than if after all the promises of his incarnation, the horn of salvation had never been raised up;—for that most glorious event is not more plainly foretold, than the perdition of the ungodly world.

Away then with the cruel soothing error, that the mercy of GOD can save us without

faith in CHRIST, and without holiness. Those alone are, or can be blessed, whom the mouth of the holy prophets, apostles, and CHRIST himself pronounces blessed. Never, therefore, in wisdom and prudence ought we to conclude ourselves safe, till *their* testimony is full and clear, that there is now no condemnation against us.

The other fatal mistake, that men can redeem themselves by repentance, acquire virtue by their own native power, and gain a blissful immortality in contempt of the atonement, and the Spirit of CHRIST, is a chief pillar also of Satan's throne;—because such notions make men seem independent of GOD. For though it be *humbly* granted, that they did not create themselves, yet if they want, after they are created, no more the help of GOD to practise virtue, than the finished vessel wants the shipwright's aid to sail, how can they be more self-sufficient? And if after sinning against the majesty of GOD, his mercy, like a pardon from earthly sovereigns, without any atonement, will admit us into heaven, how trifling must our offences seem, since it is enough to be sorry for them, and repeat

them no more? What will not at all satisfy for a capital misdemeanor, in any nation under heaven, and was it proposed as sufficient, would be rejected with disdain, is yet, upon this self-exalting scheme, all that GOD requires when his law is broken, and his honor trampled under foot. It is a most alarming question—"If any man sin against "another, the judge shall judge him; but if "a man sin against the LORD, who shall "intreat for him?" But upon this scheme we may reply, no body need intreat at all: —It is enough the sinner condemns himself, and for the time to come will do better.— Presumption is the child of self-sufficiency; —wherefore, if we can repent when we will, and by repentance redeem ourselves, and put off beloved lusts when we please—if all this is in our power, and not in the will of GOD, whether he will give us his grace to repent, believe and be saved:—if this be true, we may reasonably presume, that let our condition be ever so bad, all things necessary for our safety, may be done just as suits our humor. Thus shall we be led on to imagine, a more convenient time will come, when we

shall live that good life, which without the Spirit of GOD, and without CHRIST, shall prove our sure passport to heaven, till death seizes us in our sins. Stand therefore ever upon your guard against all those arrogant deceivers, who speak great swelling words of the power of man to redeem himself, to perform duty, or gain heaven, independent of CHRIST's sacrifice, and the influence of the Spirit. This is no more than Satan's old artful address from the beginning ("ye shall "be as gods") though now vamped up anew, and published under the name of rational, liberal religion. It is an infernal device to hide our great weakness and guilt;—making us of course despise the heaven-appointed remedy to save from both, even whilst we profess some sort of faith in the scripture.

## CHAP. XII.

### CHRIST *the Deliverer of his Church from the Men of this World.*

A THIRD enemy, from whom the LORD, the horn of salvation, delivers his people, is the world—the world of unreasonable and wicked men, who have not faith. Persons of this character, making up the vast majority, in every place, age, and condition of life, are called on this account, as they call themselves with an air of importance—the *world*. *Their friendship*, we are taught, "is enmity against "GOD; and whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of GOD," *James* iv. 4. So irreconcileable is the opposition between them. Yet who can bear to be singular? or forbear to imitate the multitude? Who can subdue the love of praise, or the more violent fear of shame? Who dare oppose the chiefs of the earth? Does not grandeur, power, wealth, or reputed wisdom, keep all in awe around them? Who dare be more religious than the great, the rich, the wise,

choose men should be? Add to this, that in general men of the world are the very persons we from infancy have been trained up to revere, in youth been glad to imitate, and afterwards owed them great deference, if we do not still remain dependent upon their favor.

Consider the *world* in this close connection, and you will easily perceive the ground of that spirited question—"Who is he that "overcometh the world?" Is it the man of reason and philosophy, who scorns all vulgar prejudices? or the man whom wealth has rendered independent; or nobility of birth taught to look down on others, as made only to serve his pleasure! No—not one of these is delivered from a dastardly fear of the faces of men. Not one of them is bold enough to perform his duty, in defiance of ridicule and contempt.—"Who is he that "overcometh the world, but he that believ- "eth that JESUS is the CHRIST? What- "soever is born of GOD, overcometh the "world." This victory is derived from CHRIST's triumph, and from the performance of his promise.—"In the world ye shall

" have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I " have overcome the world."

The way in which the LORD makes his people conquerors in this combat, is the same in all ages and places. He convinces them of the impious absurdity of valuing the favor of men, more than of GOD;—of fearing momentary reproach from vile, sinful worms, and not fearing everlasting contempt from the Son of man, and all his holy angels.—They are led also to look upon their best friend, their Savior and their GOD, covered with shame and spittle for their sakes; and at that sight they feel hatred of all selfishness and cowardice, which would otherwise prevail over them.—They are taught also to understand the spirit of the world,—that they will call themselves Christians, yet plead custom and fashion against the plain commands of CHRIST, in whose name they have no lively hope—in whose cross they see no glory: whom they fear not to offend, nor delight to obey;—yet are very angry others should pay him more respect than they do themselves. This discovery not only justifies contention with the world, but demon-

strates no man can be CHRIST's disciple, except he come out from them, and be separate.

Above all, the LORD gives his people his own peace,—a pleasing powerful proof of the wisdom of their conduct, and its excellency. Covered with this armor of light, and enriched with this invisible treasure, sneers from the profane, pity from the formal, abuse from the passionate, and persecution from the brutish, are all endured by them with calmness, and faced with intrepidity. "Thou "shalt hide them in the secret of thy pre- "sence from the pride of man:—Thou shalt "keep them secretly in a pavilion, from the "strife of tongues," *Psalm* xxxi. 20.

This deliverance of the church from the world, her enemy, exposes the *mistake* that we may be *good enough*, without giving offence by our religion. It is impossible;—for to be a Christian, is to have "the same "mind in you, which was in CHRIST JESUS." But to resemble him is to become obnoxious;—for who, under the power of natural pride, can bear to see their favorite pursuits despised, their boasted virtues slighted, and

all the ground of their hope towards GOD, regarded as a delusion?—Yet this very treatment of its pleasures, virtues, and religion, the world must receive from you, if you follow the example, or obey the commands of CHRIST.

Though your mouth were never to be opened in reproof, or vindication of the truth, your conduct speaks aloud:—of course, the nearer your connection is with persons conformed to the world (however good they may be deemed) the more provoking must you prove to them from your principles and practice. This will certainly be the effect of true faith—for the declaration is peremptory and universal,—*All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12.

The substantial, unchangeable ground of this offence, is given at full length, with great force in the ancient book of *Wisdom*:—"Let us lie in wait for the righteous, be-"cause he is not for our turn. He is clean "contrary to our doings. He upbraideth "us with offending the law, and objecteth, "to our infamy, the transgressions of our

" education. He professeth to have the " *knowledge* of GOD. He is made to reprove " our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even " to behold; for his life is not like other " men's, his ways are of another fashion. We " are esteemed of him as counterfeits. He " abstaineth from our ways, as from filthi- " ness. He pronounceth the end of the just " to be blessed, and maketh his boast, that " GOD is his Father," *Wisd. Sol.* ii. 12.

In this passage the reasons are strongly marked, why the LORD's people always are hated and despised;—for the world charges them with intolerable preciseness of behavior, affected singularity, great uncharitableness in judging others, spiritual pride, blasphemous presumption in maintaining the knowledge of forgiveness from GOD, with an ostentation of being his favorites.

Renounce, therefore, the vain thought of being a Christian in spirit and in truth, without giving offence to the world. Renounce a selfish, cowardly regard to character, which would deceive you to fancy you may live in all subjection to GOD, yet escape the censure of the careless, and the hatred of the formal.

Remember the sayings of the LORD are eternal truths:—"Marvel not if the world "hate you; it hated me, before it hated you. "—If ye were of the world, the world would "love his own:—but because you are not "of the world, but I have chosen you out "of the world, therefore the world hateth "you." Is not this proof of your relation to CHRIST, infinitely better than all the esteem, applause, or preferment which can be gained by such moderation in religion, as will offend no one?

## CHAP. XIII.

*On courting the Favor of the World.*

THIS doctrine of the deliverance of the church by the horn of salvation, from her enemy, the world, proves the mistake of fancying our usefulness depends upon the esteem and favor of those around us. Above all things avoid the name of an enthusiast, say many grave persons; and beware of giv-

ing offence, for this will ruin your character, and take away all your influence. To keep clear of real enthusiam is highly necessary, because it leads to the greatest mischiefs, by pleading private impulses and revelations, to warrant practices, principles, or actions, contrary to scripture. It is itself a species of infidelity, and often ends in avowed rejection of the Bible. But the world having always an aversion to the power of godliness, will brand the faithful servants of CHRIST, with this odious imputation. Necessary zeal for his truth, in opposition to damnable heresies, sober singularity and self-denial, "without which, no man shall see "the LORD," is being righteous overmuch, and gives great offence. The glorious privileges also of the church, I mean the consolations of CHRIST, the comforts of love, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, are in the judgment of the world, rank enthusiasm. Though these privileges are specified in the grand charter of the church, have been constantly implored in her public worship through all ages, and attested by the most venerable witnesses; yet no reputation for learning or

wisdom, or steadiness of conduct, can secure men from the charge of *Enthusiasm*, whenever they boldly assert these great points.

Must necessary zeal then for the truth of GOD, sober singularity, with the great privileges of the Christian church, be disowned or neglected for fear of losing our character, or doing less good? If so, usefulness depends no longer on real excellency, or the energy of grace, but on the good opinion which the world and Satan are pleased to entertain of us.

O shameful deceit to impose as it notoriously does upon so many grave people! How is it, that the nature of things, scripture, and matter of fact do not convince men, that they cannot serve the immortal interests of their fellow-creatures, till they are disgusting to the world? For who are the world, but a vast multitude, encouraging each other to despise Christian self-denial and communion with GOD, for the sake of pleasure, wealth, and power? Now what less than avowed abhorrence of so base a conduct towards our Maker, can ever bring such persons to feel? Habitual intercourse

with them in idleness and dissipation, to preserve a character; or polite silence in their company, whilst they deride the power of godliness, or the doctrines of scripture, or talk every one vanity with his neighbour, must keep them in countenance, and in ignorance too. But an open defence of the great things revealed to us: an intimacy with persons eminent for their godly zeal, adorned by a holy conversation, reproves the careless conformists to the fashion of the times.—This is to act like a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, and prove in the highest degree a friend to man. And if such irreconcileable opposition subsists between GOD and the world, that the latter is the enemy of the former, nothing less than total opposition to their ways, can make this manifest, and prove the means of rescuing some from perdition. In other words, to do good to the souls of men, we must live so conformably to the Christian rule, as to give offence to the world, and provoke them to abuse us in some measure.

Hence the church of CHRIST is addressed in the following tender terms:

" I beseech you by the mercies of GOD, " that ye present your bodies a living sacri- " fice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is " your reasonable service," *Rom.* xii.

Yet most reasonable as this oblation is, the holy Ghost well knew, how opposite it must be to the custom of every age. The apostle therefore immediately adds, "And be not " conformed to this world, but be ye trans- " formed by the renewing of your minds," *Rom.* xii.

With these strong evidences, matter of fact concurs to prove the gross mistake of making compliances with the world, in order *to do good* in it. For who shine brightest for their extensive usefulness in enlarging the kingdom of GOD, and adding to it many souls? Were they *prudent* men, afraid of offending the rich, the grave, or learned? No, they drew the sword, and threw away the scabbard. They came forth to shew men their transgressions, without respect to persons, or regard to consequences. From the death of the abhorred Nazarene, their ever-blessed LORD, to this hour, the most deligent copiers of his example, have been most

offensive;—so scandalous, that many who believed them to be in the right, and wished to be personally acquainted with them, dared not. Though guilty of no evil practice, nor tinctured with real enthusiasm, their heaven born love for CHRIST, troubled the world, and galled them to revenge, in cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully speaking against the righteous.

Instead of studying then to gain the world's esteem, we are commanded to "take "for an example of suffering affliction, the "prophets, who have spoken in the name of "of the LORD:" who, though accounted by some knaves, by others fools, by more madmen, have brought thousands to glory, the eternal proofs of their inestimable usefulness.

When will the prudent conformists to the fashion of the times, let us see such success from their compliances? When shall we behold them honored with the highest honor man can conceive, a company of immortal souls, by them converted from the error of their ways? No, to be useful either as Christians, or as Christian ministers, we must copy

the labor and zeal of those, whom the world could never endure. Give over then fearing any thing, but hypocrisy before GOD, and cowardice in his cause before men. Desire nothing, but to live the life of a Christian. Halt no more between GOD and the world. If the spirit of the world, pride, carelessness respecting the soul, and neglect of CHRIST, be not hateful to GOD, and destructive to men, the Gospel (with reverence I speak it) is an imposition. Do you abhor that thought as blasphemy? Abhor as much a fawning upon CHRIST from year to year in your closet, calling Him there your LORD and GOD, and then coming out to consult the world, how far they will allow you to obey his plain commands, without saying you are a Methodist. Cease rather to profess any allegiance to CHRIST, than treat Him, under professions of duty, with such contempt. "I would," saith He to the church of *Laodicea*, "thou wert hot or cold; but "because thou art lukewarm, I will spue "thee out of my mouth."

## CHAP. XIV.

### CHRIST *the Deliverer of his People from the Love of the World.*

BY the World, the inspired writers understand, not only the ungodly part of its inhabitants, but sensual pleasures, honor, riches and power: These, the beloved disciple calls, "the lust of the flesh, the lust "of the eye, and the pride of life." To gain a large proportion of what can gratify us in each, is naturally our strongest desire, and the source of endless contests amongst men. Indeed, till we are created anew in CHRIST JESUS, these things carry away our thoughts, and captivate our affections, as if they were our chief good; and in order to possess them, we throw ourselves headlong into destruction. But when objects infinitely better are brought before our view, money, state, and sensual indulgencies, lose their bewitching charms, as toys which ravish children, become our contempt in riper years. Thus by the discovery and enjoyment of things more excel-

lent, not by stoical disdain, or monkish self-denial, Christians overcome the world. The grace of GOD, by bringing salvation to the soul, teaches them to deny worldly lusts.—"We all," (says the apostle, describing the faith of the church and its effect) "beholding as in a glass, the *glory* of the LORD, "are changed into the same image from "glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the "LORD," 2 *Cor.* iii.

From hence appears the dangerous mistake of fancying we belong to CHRIST, though worldly lusts still hold dominion over us. Yet how prone are we thus to deceive ourselves! We "were once darkness, many "will say, but now are we light in the "LORD." All preaching for a course of years was the same to us, we received no benefit from it. But now we know the doctrines of grace; we delight to attend where they are displayed, and indeed can bear no other divinity. Does not this sufficiently prove, that we are the people of GOD?

I answer, this is no proof the World is conquered, or our minds renewed. We may say and do this, yet be greedy, like *Judas*, of

filthy lucre, and as hard-hearted to the cry of the poor—thirst after worldly honors, indulge childish fondness for dress and diversions, be in love with pomp, and even vex every one about us by our evil tempers. All this may be said, and done, yet our delight be only in sensual pleasures, our hearts elevated by worldly successes, or depressed by worldly fears alone, and we differ in nothing from scoffers who walk after their own lusts, but violent zeal for certain articles of the Christian faith, which in corrupt minds do much harm.

Do we then profess faith, and mean not to impose upon others, or deceive ourselves? Our victory over worldly lusts, must be the indisputable proof, that we partake of redemption. The excellency of our religious principles must shine in our business and station. Our spirit must not only be above roguery or fraud, but above covetousness also, and eagerness to get gain. And if wealth and affluence be our lot, we must conquer the enchantments of earthly and sensual gratifications. For without this substantial fruit of divine knowledge, zeal for doctrines is but

a burning fever, not the genial warmth which flows from the love of GOD:—devotion is superstition, not the worship of Him in spirit, and in truth.

What so much emboldens revilers of the doctrines of grace? Professors, whose covetousness and treachery, marked with demure appearance and religious talk, evidently render it unsafe to trust them. Who from a wicked imagination that the election of grace is their sanctuary, and the righteousness of CHRIST their robe of salvation, conclude that deadly thing, Sin, can do no hurt to their souls. Did not the scripture affirm there must be such offences, and were there not many whose Christian life and doctrine perfectly accord, we should be almost ashamed of the Gospel itself, from the scandalous selfishness of numbers who profess it. And though the only lawful conclusion from such melancholy instances is, that "If any "man say I know Him, and keep not his "commandments, he is a liar, and the truth "is not in him;" yet these false professors will be loudly urged by the enemies of the truth, to make it odious.

O ye self-deceived professors, enslaved by worldly lusts, hear this, and tremble, and turn from your evil ways.—Ye are answerable for all these sad consequences before GOD—answerable for strengthening their hands who revile CHRIST—for aiding them to seduce others into their wicked errors—for fixing them in contempt of what GOD has revealed. And to imagine you can be members of CHRIST, and safe in Him, whilst your conduct lays a stumbling-block in the way of the Gospel, is an infatuation one would not believe possible, was it not often seen.

The terrible doom awaiting those, who persist to the last in such a mistake, is awfully denounced. "Woe unto the world, be-
"cause of offences, (at which they catch,
"and plead to their own undoing;) for it
"must needs be that offences come; but
"woe to that man by whom the offence
"cometh: it were better for him that a
"millstone was hanged about his neck, and
"he cast into the sea."

## CHAP. XV.

*On the Natural Depravity of Man.*

ANOTHER enemy into whose hands we are fallen, is generally called in scripture, the *Flesh:* a word used to express the debased corrupt state of our nature, which in its actings and tendency, is perfectly contrary to the law and holy nature of GOD. And this is called *flesh*, because a corrupt and sinful nature is what properly belongs to mankind, *to all flesh*, as they are in themselves. For man's nature, forsaken of divine and holy principles, of itself became exceedingly corrupt, and utterly depraved. See what detestable deeds! See what infernal tempers are the works of the flesh! "Adultery, for-" nication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idola-" try, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emula-" tion, strife, sedition, heresies, envy, murder, " drunkenness, revellings, and such like," *Gal.* v. 21.

Every one of these wickednesses, if left to ourselves in an hour of temptation, we

are capable of committing. The charge of such total depravity of nature, must be denied and highly resented by creatures so corrupt. We could not be so vile, as GOD declares we are become by the fall, were we naturally disposed to plead guilty to this charge. For pride, one great part of our disease, so intoxicates, that many who are a curse to society, by their evil example, are far from holding a mean opinion of their own goodness. Hence it should not surprize us to find the violent assertors of man's native innocence, amongst the licentious in principles or practice.

In order to prove we are in the hands of this enemy, a debased, corrupt nature, I shall produce the concurrent testimony of the word of GOD, with the confessed condition of every man living, even of those who have diligently used all possible means to extirpate this corruption.

Clear and full, in proof of innate corruption, are the words of *Job*. It seemed hard to him, that he must be singled out as it were, to suffer such extremity of affliction, though a sinner, since he was so

from his birth. He urges therefore his complaint in that affecting question, "Who can "bring a clean thing out of an unclean? "Not one," *Job* xiv. This assertion is of more weight, because *Job* is not here comparing men with angels, but simply speaking of his condition, as born of a woman, born to trouble, because born in sin.

This ancient testimony *David*, himself an amazing instance of the force of innate depravity, confirms. For, to the consternation of all his pious subjects, the joy of his profane ones, and the astonishment of all succeeding ages, *David* commits adultery, and then murder, to conceal his great offence.

Such enormous wickedness done by one distinguished for his knowledge and love of GOD, loudly calls upon the most advanced Christians to take heed lest they fall. When this backslider, (a most conspicuous monument of the free grace of GOD) is recovered, he delineates, as an inspired penman, all the workings of a broken and contrite spirit, in his penitential Psalm. And here we are taught, that one reason why he was

suffered to plunge into such an abyss of sin, was, that his fall might stand on record, a demonstration of the justice of GOD's charge of innate depravity upon the children of men. "Against Thee only have "I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, "that thou mightest be justified in thy say- "ing, (or in this saying of thine) Behold, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did "my mother conceive me," *Psalm* li.— And if *David* was thus shapen and conceived, the whole human race, naturally engendered, must be so too.

This positive assertion of the inspired father, *Solomon* his son, affirms again in the strongest manner possible, after recovering also from the most shameful practice of idolatry for many years.

"The heart of the sons of men is full of "evil, and madness is in their heart whilst "they live, and after that they go down to "the dead," *Eccles.* ix. 3.

Observe, *Solomon* does not say the *heart* of this or that sinner, but of the whole offspring of *Adam*. He uses the word also in the singular number, because "as face an-

"swers to face in the water, so do the "hearts of the children of men." This one heart of the whole human race is *full* of evil. The word, here translated *full*, signifies as full as a thing can hold, being used to express the fulness of an overflowing river, and of the wind when it blows a hurricane. The word translated *evil*, denotes what is mischievous and pernicious—to others mischievous, to the man himself pernicious. How could the inspired writer more forcibly affirm the corruption of man's native inclinations?

The second clause asserts the excess and obstinacy of this inbred depravity. *And madness* (the *Hebrew* is plural) *is in their heart*—They desire, purpose, choose, and act, with respect to GOD and their own eternal interest, like persons perfectly insane, *whilst they live* in their natural state. No promises or threatenings, judgments or mercies from GOD; no advantages which obedience to him procures; no miseries springing from the indulgence of vile affections, produce in them any change.—Sinners an hundred years old, are full of phrenzy

as in their youth, and *then*, if left to themselves, in this condition *they go down to the dead*—into a miserable eternity.

Thus the holy Ghost, by *David*, affirms the birth of man is in a depraved condition; by *Solomon*, that during the whole time of his abode here, he is altogether evil, and his exit dreadful beyond imagination, if left to himself.

The same doctrine was taught by CHRIST, no less plainly when he was upon earth, than by his prophets before his appearance. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," saith the LORD, "and that which is born "of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I "said unto thee, Ye must be born again," *John* iii.

*Flesh* in this sentence, is directly opposed to the renewing sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit. But that only which in its nature is sinful, can in its nature be opposite to the Spirit of GOD. Wherever therefore in the Bible the flesh is opposed to the Spirit of grace, the word can mean nothing else, but sinful corruption. Therefore to be born flesh, of flesh, is to be the corrupt offspring

of corrupt degenerate parents, so as to need renewing grace from the Spirit of GOD on that account, even from our birth.

With these scripture proofs (and many more equally strong might be adduced) the condition of the human race, manifestly agrees. "Since it is not owing," (as that incomparable reasoner Mr. Professor *Edwards* argues) "to any external circum-"stances peculiarly prevalent, which lead "men to commit sin. But sin is chargeable, "according to universal experience, on per-"sons of all constitutions, capacities, con-"ditions, manners, opinions; and educa-"tions; in all countries, climates, nations, "and ages. Hence there is the same evi-"dence, that this propensity to sin, is in the "*very nature* of the subject, as we have "in any other case whatever: which is "wholly from observing the effect is the "same in all changes of time, and place, "and under every variety of circumstances. "It is in this way only, that we know there "is any propensity at all seated in the na-"ture of man. And that we judge right, "in imputing this depravity to nature, and

"not to custom or bad example, appears "plainly from the manner in which GOD "speaks of the first, or natural state of "man. There is not the least difference "made between one or another—All are "lost—All are concluded under sin—All "are enemies to GOD—the whole world is "become guilty before him*."

Whatever difficulties therefore above our present solution attend the doctrine of innate depravity, both scripture testimony, and the universal condition of mankind, demonstrate the truth of it.

With these proofs, another of equal force

* See the Reverend Mr. Professor *Edwards's* Book, published by *Keith*, intitled, *A full Proof and Defence of the great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, in Answer to Dr. John Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin.* This performance, the first in the world, without doubt, upon the subject, whether you consider the force of argument, or the spirit of the writer, has been published seven years in *England.* The assertors of man's native innocence have made (as far as I can learn) no reply to it. If they can, the credit of their cause calls aloud upon them to confute his arguings. If they cannot, they ought at least to cease from vaunting, and no more call Original Sin, Original Nonsense.

may be joined; I mean, the power of indwelling sin, after diligent trial for many years of every possible method to root it out. Thousands in the church of CHRIST have made the experiment, yet not one of them ever succeeded. After the example of *David* and *Daniel*, they have prayed instantly at evening, morning, and noon-day; have watched, fasted, and given most liberally to the poor. Their souls have panted for full conformity to the law of GOD, knowing it to be "holy, just, and good." Their conversation has been an honor to the Gospel, a blessing to their friends, an example to all. Whatever wrong practices they were drawn into by custom, they could easily renounce, and shake off every evil habit — But still the plague of their own hearts remained. "They found a law, that when "they would do good, evil was present with "them; for they delighted in the law of "GOD, after the inward man, But they "saw another law in their members, warring "against the law of their mind, and "bringing them into captivity to the law of

"sin which was in their members." For after all the pains which ever were or can be taken, "there is not a just man upon "earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," *Eccles.* vii. 20.

Hence persons of exact judgment, and distinguished excellency, have daily confessed their sins, according to our LORD's injunction, and deplored their defilement to the last. Who ever knew one single exception to the following observation, that the more pains men take to do their duty, the more cause they find to lament their sad deficiencies? The more intensely they apply themselves to follow after holiness, the more clearly they perceive their own vileness.—As dabblers in natural philosophy grow conceited of their knowledge, when a *Bacon* or *Newton* lament their ignorance; so idle superficial Christians, feel no depravity within, when St. *Paul*, when all "who hunger "and thirst after righteousness," groan under the burden of the flesh, and feel themselves wretched, from their depravity before GOD.

Now what was never extirpated by the most diligent use of the best means, properly applied for a great length of time, it is evident must run in the blood, must be interwoven in the very frame of man.

Our combat therefore with this enemy, the Flesh, as with Satan and the World, must continue till we die. Yet the LORD, the horn of salvation, delivers his people from the dominion of their evil nature, on this side the grave, and from its infection, when He takes them to himself. "For so "many as are led by the Spirit of GOD, "they are the sons of GOD. And if any "man have not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is "none of his," *Rom.* viii. This almighty Agent "crucifies the flesh, with the affec-"tions and lusts. His fruit is in all good-"ness, righteousness, and truth;"—*i. e.* in a general habitual obedience to GOD, though never without defect or pollution. The fruit of the Spirit, is "love, joy, peace, long-"suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meek-"ness, temperance:" not one, or some of these graces without the rest, but all of

them growing together, a beautiful cluster upon the living vine.

So that no one led by the Spirit, can indulge in any sin, or allow himself to neglect any duty, by pleading the force of natural depravity; because supernatural aid is promised, and victoriously exerted in their behalf, who seek it, to make them "holy in "all manner of conversation."

In this condition, the people of GOD remain. The best of them defiled with sin, whilst in the body, yet all of them obedient to the will of heaven, till at length they are called to join "the spirits of just men made "perfect." Though they go on their way, therefore, mourning for sin, and each finds abundant cause to cry out, "O wretched "man that I am, who shall deliver me from "the body of this death?" Still each may rejoice also in full assurance of final victory, saying, "I thank GOD, through JE-"SUS CHRIST our Lord."

## CHAP. XVI.

*Self-complacency from good Reputation exposed.*

THE scripture doctrine of man's innate depravity, proves the common mistake of supposing those who are free from all vice, cannot be under the wrath of GOD. It is hard to condemn ourselves as vile, when relations, friends, and neighbours, esteem us highly. In such a case, Can there be any reason, we are wont to say, for looking up with earnest supplication to the crucified JESUS, as *lost sinners?* Self-abasement to this degree may become felons and harlots, the dissolute or infamous, but is it necessary in persons of good reputation from their youth up? Undoubtedly;—for what avails the sepulchres appearing beautiful without, when within there is all uncleanness? If it was not so, would an indictment from heaven concluding all under sin, be brought against us? Is not this of itself, full proof of our *great wickedness*, however we may be accounted excellent before men? Shall not

our Judge be believed in his declaration, "that whatsoever is born of the flesh, is "flesh," sinful and corrupt: and his apostle in that very alarming assertion, "So then, "they that are in the flesh, cannot please "GOD?"—Must disobedience to parents, or base lying; open lewdness, or scandalous dishonesty, be chargeable upon us, before we are to condemn ourselves as vile, or confess we are "in danger of hell-fire?" One of the most distinguished amongst the saints of GOD made a quite different estimate of himself, which stands recorded, to confront all who overrate their good reputation: I mean the Baptist. From his mother's womb, he was full of the holy Ghost. The abandoned *Herod* stood in awe of him; EMMANUEL himself attested, "he was a burning and a shining light." If any person, then, might have alledged, "I am innocent, therefore I need no fountain to cleanse me from my sin:" If any person could have reason to think, he did not deserve eternal death for his guilt, this was the man. But what does *John* think of himself? Behold it, O ye innocent world, and

blush for shame. Behold it, and cease to utter error against the LORD to your own destruction. When JESUS comes to be baptized of him, with what humble amazement, does he first decline the sacred service, and then cry out from a deep sense of his own defilement, "I have need to be bap- "tized of thee, and comest thou to me?"— But he could have no need to be baptized, or washed in the blood of the Lamb, if the best obedience, even from childhood, could have made him innocent; if repentance be the only condition of acceptance with GOD, or if the consequence of sin, be not eternal death, without the Atonement.

Does such a one as the Baptist cry out, "I have need to be baptized of thee,"— What ought we to think of our own character? How little, how poor is our supposed goodness, and fair reputation, when compared with his bright example. Let us keep better company than the world. Let us observe the saints of GOD, and weigh well the import of their expressions, when they speak of themselves before Him. This will soon convince us, that every man

in his best estate deserves the curse of the law, from which nothing can save him, but infinite grace through the Atonement; the benefit of which belongs to those only, who confess from the heart, that their sin can no other way be cancelled.

## CHAP. XVII.

*The Insufficiency of external Religion exposed.*

This doctrine, that we are all born after the flesh, and have naturally a fountain of evil within, proves the mistake of trusting in the mere performance of religious duties.

Many very devout people ask, with an air of confidence, "What more can we do? We constantly say our prayers, go to church, receive the sacrament, do no harm, and give alms. Are not we good Christians?" I reply, the grand point is, from what motive, and with what end are these things done? Prayers, which are merely the effect of good education, not from a sense of

guilt and want—Prayers said to pacify the conscience, or earn heaven, not offered up from hatred of iniquity, or love of righteousness—religious duties performed as a task, not with alacrity, and delight to hold communion with GOD—and alms given, in order to think well of ourselves, and cover the multitude of sins, make up the religion of a Hypocrite in grain. Will you ask then, Whether any thing more than this is necessary to make a good Christian?

I would also intreat you to examine what advantage you have received from your religion. Has it subdued your passions? or rectified those gross mistakes we naturally fall into, respecting the character of GOD, ourselves, and the way of salvation. Has it enriched your mind with a treasure of divine knowledge, to which you were once an entire stranger? A knowledge of efficacy to produce all the fruits of righteousness. If you grow angry at such close questions, unable to answer them in the affirmative—if you know nothing more of GOD, or yourself; nor have any proof that you are accepted of Him, more than you

had ten or twenty years ago, into what a fatal mistake are you fallen? Utterly destitute of the benefits which constitute the excellency of religion, yet obstinately positive you are a very good Christian, and need no divine change.

Let me add, if your external religion be sufficient, as you confidently suppose, then what passes in your breast, must resemble what the scripture saints experienced: for allowing they might exceed us in degrees of holiness, yet every Christian's experience, supposing it genuine, must be of the same kind as theirs. Compare your own with this standard. Watchfulness, labor, contention against the flesh, was the constant employment of their minds. Sometimes they could pray with delight and fervency, often they could not. We see them one while weary, faint, and ready to give up all for lost. In due time their cry was heard, and they sung a song of triumph. Darkness and light, distresses and deliverances, joy and grief, succeeded each other. At some seasons, prayer, the word of the LORD, his day and house, proved to them a rich repast.—

At other times, they sat like a sick man at table, and could relish nothing. Now we see all within is peace and glowing admiration of the truth, ways, and works of GOD. By and by, trying providences move them to doubt of his love or faithfulness, and to behave themselves unseemly; till recovering, each accuses himself in that humbling confession, "So foolish and ignorant was I, "even as a beast before thee." Many parts of the Bible prove what is here affirmed, and the 119th *Psalm* at large.

I appeal now to your conscience, who build your hope of going to heaven on your external religion and virtues; Are you acquainted with such changes in your mind? or do you not rather hate and reproach this experimental proof of innate depravity as Enthusiasm? Do not you say your prayers at one time as well as at another? Do not you do your duty in going to church one Sunday just as well as at another?—And at all times think, without giving yourself the least uneasiness about the matter, you do as well as can be expected from such frail creatures as we all are;

Do you not live a perfect stranger to a change from darkness to light, from fear to lively hope, from grief to joy, on account of spiritual deliverances? Should this be your case, you still want every thing essential to a good Christian, if to be one, is to resemble those who stand in the Bible as patterns for our imitation. Because the religion and goodness in which you confide, is no more like theirs, than an image made to speak by mechanism, is like a living man.

Be no longer then so confident you are a good Christian, because you say your prayers, go constantly to church, and give alms. Try yourself by the Oracles of GOD. What think you of your corrupt nature, of your wicked heart? Is the horn of salvation absolutely needful in your eyes to save you from yourself? Do you find in your own bosom, the company of two armies, the law in your members warring against the law of your mind; the flesh lusting against the Spirit? Or, on the contrary, Are you floating down the stream of time, at peace with the world and the flesh, unknowing of any hurt or impediment you receive from ei-

ther? In this case, the unchangeable decree from heaven is directly pointed against you. Hear it, and consider yourself, and turn unto the LORD.—"If ye live after the "flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the "Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, "ye shall live," *Rom.* viii.

## CHAP. XVIII.

### *On easy and polite Religion.*

SATAN, the World, and the Flesh, as we have seen, are restless in their opposition to us, and always our enemies; from whose power, CHRIST alone can save. How palpable then is the error common among the rich and polite, concerning the very nature of religion? It was never designed, say they, to forbid favorite amusements, or abridge us of the liberty to please ourselves from day to day. It is the raving Enthusiast's pen-

cil, which draws this smiling Cherub* with the features of a demon.

Thus under the name of innocent amusements, licentiousness is encouraged, and Christian self-denial deemed the penance of gloomy bigots.

The contrast between scriptural religion, and this easy substitute, chosen in its place, will fully appear from the following comparison.

Men ought always to "watch and pray, "that they enter not into temptation," says the Judge of all.—You may indulge without fear or scruple, if your fortune can bear the expence, in every diversion, says the smiling cherub. "Let your loins be girded, and "your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like "men, who wait for the coming of the "LORD;" is his command to his church.—Enjoy freely dance and song, the stage, the tavern, the card-table. After this the dregs both of your time and spirits, will suffice for

* Liberal religion, as some call it, in opposition to ancient Christianity, is often represented under the image of a smiling Cherub, to denote its great good humor, and the large gratifications it allows us.

devotional duties, says the smiling cherub. "Except a man deny himself, and take up "his cross daily, and follow me, he cannot "be my disciple;" saith the LORD.—There can be no harm in conforming to the vogue, and joining in all mirthful pastimes, kindly provided to relax the mind, and promote good humour, says the cherub. "Strait is "the gate, and narrow is the way, which "leadeth unto life, and few there be that "find it. For we wrestle not against flesh "and blood, but against principalities and "powers: Put on therefore the whole ar-"mor of GOD, that having done all, ye "may be able to stand," says the Wisdom from above.—To make religion a work of so much difficulty, paints the Deity as taking pleasure in the mortification of his creatures, and frightens them from his service, says the smiling cherub. The word of GOD calls Christians to watchfulness, as centinels to their post;—to run for the heavenly prize, like racers to the goal—to hardships and war, as good soldiers; adding exhortations, intreaties, commands to slay every lust, though it be painful as plucking out a right eye;

declaring, "Many shall seek to enter into "life, and shall not be able;"—that foolish virgins, and slothful servants, perish together with greater offenders. These exhortations, commands, and warnings, so expressive of difficulty and labor, belong to the ages of persecution, before the world and the church joined in friendly alliance, says the smiling cherub, and only respect that fierce contest. We live in happier days, when our whole duty may be done without any combat, mortification, vigilance or labor.

O vile seducer! Can the way to eternal glory in any age, be a life of sloth and self-indulgence? Are not watchfulness, prayer, persevering self-denial, always necessary to preserve the weak, and defend the tempted? Do the pleasures of sin allure now with less attraction than in former times? Are our hearts less evil, or do worldly lusts solicit with feebler force, than they were wont to do seventeen ages past? Or do the power, subtilty, and malice of wicked angels, long practised in the destruction of souls, require, on our parts, less resistance or protection? Besides, What ideas must men conceive of

heaven, who suppose it possible for those to enter there, who know no more spiritual gratifications, than the stage, tavern, or card-table afford? who lead their life in such ignorance, indolence, and voluptuousness, that some well-regulated states, would have punished with heavy penalties? Unless a transformation of soul take place, persons of this character are no more capable of admission into heaven, than profligate villains, a nuisance to all around them; since there is no more meetness for spiritual enjoyment in one than in the other. And to lead men to hope a life of this kind can end well, is to take part with their evil passions, instead of exhorting them to seek deliverance from their dominion. It is to set aside the essential duty of Christians, whilst the worship, for form's sake, is retained. But such heartless worship, in the eyes of men of sense, is a farce; in the eyes of sincere Christians, a profanation of the name of religion; in the eyes of God, mockery and insult.

Instead, therefore, of "saying to the seers, "see not, and to the prophets, prophecy "not. speak to us smooth things, prophecy

" deceit, cause the holy One of *Israel* to " cease from before us."—Instead of loving this cruel flattery, desire earnestly to hear the whole truth,—" whatsoever GOD hath " commanded." Desire to have the devices of Satan, the temptations of the World, the corruptions of the Flesh, all set before you without disguise. Desire no abatement whatever, may be made by the teachers of CHRIST, in compliance with custom, or in gratification of your passions.

## CHAP. XIX.

### CHRIST, *a Savior from Death.*

THE last enemy, out of whose hands, the LORD, the horn of salvation delivers his people, is Death: which, whether its origin, manner of approach, or nature be considered, deserves the name of King of Terrors. It entered into the world by divine decree, to punish the most enormous of-

fence, except the murder of CHRIST, which the sun ever saw: for man, like the angels, was made upright, though liable to fall: surrounded with a profusion of blessings from GOD, who beheld his new-made creature with delight, and pronounced him *very good.* "And the LORD GOD commanded "the man, saying, Of every tree in the gar- "den, thou mayest eat freely; but of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day "thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die," *Gen.* ii.

Nevertheless *Adam* did eat of it, though he knew the threatening included his seed, as one with himself: for it is against all reason to suppose the sentence could contain any greater extent of punishment, than *Adam* understood the threatening to do. Every possible circumstance therefore of provocation, met together in this one offence. It was the vilest ingratitude against divine bounty surrounding him on every side. It was an impudent impeachment of his supreme Benefactor's wisdom, goodness and

love, as if the command had been foolish, hard, or envious. It was a violent suspicion, if not a denial of his veracity. It was a wilful opposition to his authority, a revolt from his government, an exaltation of himself above GOD, in seeking his own interest and pleasure, by trampling upon the honor, law, and majesty of his Maker.

This one offence, big with all hateful qualities, instantly wrought a disastrous change in man's condition, as terrible earthquakes do in capital cities, leaving behind it a sad scene of ruins: for the moment *Adam* transgressed, the threatening began to take place. *Instantly* the light, the presence, the love and image of GOD, departed from him, with the immortality which he before possessed: for his deeply injured Maker withdrew, as it seemed necessary he should, from rebel man. He summoned him to appear, and hear his doom, and then expelled him Paradise, to wander on the earth, a poor, guilty, corrupt, and dying creature.

Death, entering thus by sin into the world, as a punishment for the highest act of rebel-

lion against GOD, always strikes men with terror, till sunk into brutish stupidity, or till the Savior has taken away its sting.

The *manner* of Death's approach, bears strong testimony also to its guilty origin: for till superabounding grace has converted this foe into a friend, he exceedingly distresses the children of men, whether springing upon them from an ambush, or making his advance by regular siege. In the former case, Death appals, and seizes in a moment the voluptuous in the midst of their carousals—utterly impoverishes with a stroke the prosperous sons of commerce, exulting in their day-dreams of realizing their wealth—drives, as a whirlwind, the ambitious from the face of the earth, when their honors are blooming, their preferments enlarging, and all their projects ripening to their wish.

What sudden havoc also does this destroyer make of domestic comforts in which we may lawfully delight. A swift arrow from his quiver, strikes to the heart the bridegroom rejoicing over his bride—cuts off a lovely blossom, the only child, from its parental stem—divorces those in a moment,

whose conjugal affection, matured by years of sweetest society, united them like soul and body — divorces them, when the tender pledges of their love, most need their mutual care. By such daily inroads, this dreadful spoiler harasses mankind, leaving those who have yet escaped his shafts, and still more those who have been wounded, anxious for the absolute uncertainty of all their possessions.

When instead of thus seizing upon his prey, Death advances, as in general more slowly, his assaults are bitterly distressing.

> ——— All maladies
> Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
> Of heart-sick agony, all fev'rous kinds
> And fierce catarrhs, and pining atrophy,
> Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
> Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
> Dire is the tossing, deep the groans,
> Whilst over them, triumphant Death his dart
> Shakes ———

At length he strikes the blow, which brings on the entire sensible destruction of the body, soon making it too hideous for the eye of tenderest friends to look on, too of-

fensive to be endured at all, a fit tenant for the grave, a feast for worms.

Yet how small a part of the evil of Death, do all these gloomy ignominious circumstances contain! They are but the awful introduction to that "outward darkness," which receives those who die in their sins: "for the "wages of sin is death:"—Death, opposed to the holiness and happiness of eternal life in the presence of GOD, which must therefore mean a state of hopeless misery.

And can the horn of salvation deliver out of all this dreadful calamity? Can He cause light to spring up in the midst of such darkness, and fill the close of life with divine consolations? He can, He does. His all-sufficient grace prepares his people for the combat with this last enemy, animates and succours them in the midst of it; enriches them immensely at the moment of their dissolution, and redeems them at last in the sight of men and angels, from every trace of death's dominion.

To encounter Death, the faithful are prepared, both by their knowledge and experience. "They know in whom they have

" believed, and that He is able to keep that " which they have committed unto Him." They know their Redeemer is the mighty GOD—and that part of the everlasting Covenant between the Father and Him, insures their victory over the grave ;—for it is written, "Thy dead men, shall live; with my " dead body shall they arise. Awake, and " sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew, is " as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall " cast out the dead," *Isa.* xxvi.

These wonderful things of GOD's law, being certified to them by the holy Ghost, become the object of their admiration, the foundation of lively hope, and their richest treasure. Hence Death grows familiar to their minds, as a translation to enjoy spiritual life to perfection in the presence of their beloved, the sweetness of which they have imperfectly known already. — Answers to their prayers, and a change of state in passing from darkness to light, from death to life, in their conversion, alters the visage of Death, and its nature too. Instead of seizing upon them, to root them out of the earth, and pluck them out of their dwelling,

it comes to exalt them to glory, and honor, and immortality.

Add to this, the heart of CHRIST, who endured in his own person the agonies of Death, for the salvation of his people, is full of compassion towards them: for we are assured, He is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. Wherefore when they walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, his tender care and guardian power are over them, so that they shall fear no evil.

Is this a conclusion unconfirmed by facts? No, it is beyond a doubt, that the saints in CHRIST have departed with sweet complacency in their countenances, and "abound-" ing in hope, through the power of the holy " Ghost given unto them." They triumphed in ancient time to the astonishment of all, to the conversion even of proud Pagan philosophers, whose chief was wont to call *Death* " of all dreadful things, the most dreadful." The primitive Christians conquered when they fell. They cried out, "Death shall not " be able to separate us from the love of " GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our Lord. " —Death is ours—Death is gain."

Now are we to limit this his overflowing love, as too many injurious to CHRIST and his church do, to the first believers.—For at all times He is the same all-sufficient friend to his people. What spiritual succours therefore He supplies, when the body is sinking, appears from the behavior of many of his dying members.—Who can behold them in their last conflict, without being compelled to say, They are not left to suffer the sentence of Death on their bodies, without the cup of consolation to drink? We have seen, we have seen, thousands can attest, the exit of real Christians, inspiring every spectator at the same moment, with the same request, "Let me die the death "of the righteous, and let my *Afterstate** be like his."

* The word *Acherith* signifies an *aftertime* or *state*;—a state, which begins again after some remarkable period. See Mr. *Peters's Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job*, p. 288, 1st Edition.

This masterly writer demonstrates, that the church of GOD has all along been acquainted with the Covenant founded in the promise of a Redeemer, and of eternal life in Him. Bishop *Sherlock* read this Dissertation (I have been told) twice over. An unquestionable proof

Their bodies, it is true, vanquished by Death, return to the dust. Yet their souls, so far from suffering loss, receive unspeakable advantage from this blow. Immediately they live, where the place of their abode, the high excellency of the society they join, and their own perfection, fill them with happiness beyond the reach of our ideas: for as soon as "absent from the body, they are "present with the LORD*."

of its uncommon excellency, since it could please a first-rate genius, in a science to which he had so long applied himself.

* "This scripture," (2 *Cor.* v. 6.) says Dr. *Watts*, in his *Essay on a separate State*, "seems to me so plain, "so express, and so answerable a proof of the existence "of the spirits of good men *immediately* after death, that "I could never meet with but two ways of evading it. "The one, that St. *Paul* might be *mistaken*. This needs "no answer. The other, that this text, with one or "two more of the same kind, do indeed speak of the "happiness of souls in a separate state, but they only "refer to the Apostles themselves.—I answer, the whole "church of CHRIST is encouraged with this assurance "of *immediate* happiness after Death. Witness what "goes before, and what follows the text. All agree "this belongs to the whole church."

Besides, St. *John* utterly denies this vast difference,

Nor is the triumph of Death over the bodies of the saints in CHRIST, more than transitory: for their graves, are but so many consecrated repositories, each under inviolable obligation to preserve and restore upon demand, every atom of sacred dust, entrusted to their keeping. Thousands of years indeed, must pass between the interment and resurrection of the saints. Still at the destined moment, the heavens shall open; the trump of GOD shall sound; the Savior shall come in the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory. Then shall men and angels see him sitting on his throne, and making all things new. Then shall matter of fact prove, to the conviction of the whole infidel world, that the horn of salvation has delivered his people to the uttermost, "out of the hands

some are so fond of making, between the Apostles and the whole church, in point of spiritual privileges; by assuring us the very end of his writings, and consequently of the whole College of Apostles, was, that All who received their words with true faith, should have *fellowship* with them, 1 *John* i. 3.

If the Reader desires to see this matter discussed, he may consult my *Duty of Man*, p. 491. 2d Edition.

"of all their enemies." Then shall he appear "the resurrection and the life, the "plague of death, the destruction of the "grave." Then shall the vile bodies of his saints, "be changed into the likeness of his "own glorious body," and become incorruptible and splendid as the sun.

Thus the whole church consummated in bliss, with eyes full of rapturous love, all fastened upon JESUS of *Nazareth*, shall cry out, "HE hath swallowed up Death in vic-"tory!"

## CHAP. XX.

*On false Confidence in a well-spent Life.*

THIS doctrine, that the church is redeemed out of the hands of Death, only by the horn of salvation, proves the mistake of attempting to subdue the fear of it, by looking back on a well-spent life. An attempt equally absurd and impious, in those who call themselves Christians. For what is the best life

any man can have to reflect on? It does not come up to a thousandth part of his duty. Consider the excellency of GOD, and of his law; our increasing debt for mercies bestowed, and our great advantages to know and obey Him. In these circumstances, above all, should not our love to Him be perfectly pure, and more active, than thirst for gain in misers, or love of glory in the soldier's breast? On no account should it ever be mixed with selfish motives; prove languid, much less be violated through love of sin. Yet where is the man upon earth, who can bear to have his life brought to this test?

Again, Our love to our neighbour ought to keep us from all evil-speaking; from every expression of unkindness and disrespect;—ought to fill us with pity for his faults, and bowels of mercies towards him in all his sufferings. Who alive, dare look his fellow-creatures in the face, and say, In this manner have I ever loved you all?

Once more; Our hatred of the first motions of sin, before a purpose of offending is conceived, ought to be quick and effectual

to repel it, as our natural instinct is for self-preservation. But how unaccountably stupid, in this respect, are the most excellent!—How often defiled with iniquity, without any concern! The conclusion from this fair stating of man's condition is, that the best life of the best man upon earth, affords abundant cause for humiliation and self-loathing; needs infinite mercy to pass over its offences, and the blood of CHRIST, who is GOD, to make atonement for them.

Is this conclusion, so offensive to pride, a conclusion drawn by erring mortals? No: It is a self-evident scripture consequence from our LORD's command to his disciples, *daily* to implore the forgiveness of their trespasses; which must imply. that they *daily* offend. Can the same life, then, I ask, so defective and stained; which calls for daily humiliation, which needs infinite mercy, and the blood of CHRIST to put away its sins?—Can this same life be reviewed with pleasure, and give just confidence to disarm death of its sting?

So absurd would it be to look back upon upon our past life, for comfort in death,

however excellent our works may have been. But it is well known, that no truly good person, ever trusts in his own righteousness for comfort. This is the mistake of vain, idle people, who know neither GOD, nor themselves: who first make their own rule of duty, and then applaud themselves for their observance of it, because they think they do no harm, and their conduct is not scandalous.

Further, The attempt to subdue the fear of Death by consciousness of our own virtue, is in the sight of GOD an high provocation, no less than a gross absurdity in itself: because it pours contempt upon the heaven-appointed means of vanquishing this last enemy. The scripture teaches, "that the "death of CHRIST *alone* abolished death;— "that He tasted death for every one of the "sons He should bring to glory, to deliver "them, who through fear of death, were all "their lifetime subject to bondage." The scripture teaches us, that the Savior led Sin, Death, and Hell, our captivity captive; and the World, as we have seen, is to end with his triumphant appearance, as their destroyer.

Every attempt, therefore, to overcome them by confidence in our own righteousness, is a sacrilegious attack upon his glory;—A claim, derogatory to the merit of the blood of the Lamb:—A claim, which eclipses the Sun of righteousness. He is as nothing; the well-spent life is all: for we may as reasonably attempt to move at once in opposite directions, as to find acceptance with GOD in part from our own righteousness, and in part from the sacrifice of CHRIST.

Fatal mistake! into which many serious people fall, through pride and ignorance. Base treatment of Him! who in his own person overcame the sharpness of Death, and then as the great High Priest of his church, opened the way into the Holiest, by his own blood.—Self-exaltation, offensive in the sight of GOD, as matter of fact strongly indicates! For visit dying persons, who, as is common, endeavor to cover themselves with this falsehood, you will find them, though in full possession of their reason, miserably dejected. Their lips drop not a single expression to comfort afflicted relations, or confound infidels, by a Christian triumph in their last

hours. Nor is it strange, that the Light of Life so despised, should not visit them, or that there should be no appearance of any advantage, received from the Gospel, in victory over this last enemy.

Physicians, friends, relations, generally treat the sick and dying, as if Death was the pursuivant of incensed justice, the beginning of sorrows. And men of this self-righteous character love to have it so; because the least hint that the Judge is at the door, would strike them with a panic. What can have the appearance of delusive hope more than this? Now is the time of trial. Now, when the understanding still remains entire, let pleasing reflections on a well-spent life, do the office of a Savior. Now let us see the answer of a good conscience towards GOD, and boldness to enter into the Holiest, obtained without the knowledge of CHRIST, and the power of his resurrection.

If this gloomy awful manner of meeting Death, strongly suggests the idea of false dependence, and the hope of an hypocrite; the scripture is positive in this point. It accuses all, who build their expectation of mercy

from GOD on a well-spent life, as frustrating his grace—and make the death of CHRIST appear foolishness itself: for if there be a law which can give life, then CHRIST is dead in vain. All who expect mercy in this way, are of the works of the law: "but so many "as are of the works of the law, are cursed," *Gal.* iii.

I have dwelt the longer on this mistake, in hopes of relieving many serious and devout people, whose case is pitiable indeed. They strive to be prepared for eternity, by doing many things which are commanded, yet the dread of Death perpetually haunts them. They tremble as much at the thought of appearing before GOD, as if He was an inexorable Judge, and not a tender Father. This dread is owing, not to any particular offences, which pain their consciences, but to a false reliance on the merit of their own righteousness.

May such persons be brought to understand the import, and believe the truth of the glorious proclamation made from heaven, for the full relief of guilty dying creatures.

" In this mountain (on which JESUS was " slain, an offering for sin) shall the LORD " of Hosts make unto all people a feast of " fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; a " feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines " on the lees, well refined." Such a soul-satisfying repast, are " the spiritual blessings " in heavenly things, in CHRIST JESUS." And to crown them all, as it follows, " He " will destroy in this mountain (by the death " of CHRIST) the face of the covering cast " over all people, and the veil that is spread " over all nations," (in that dreadful darkness, which our dissolution brings with it.) " He will swallow up death in victory," *Isa.* xxv.

Acquaint thyself with this Almighty Conqueror, and the last Enemy shall no more appall thee. After the example of *Jacob*, *Moses*, *David*, and St. *Paul*, thou shalt express thy confidence, when thy flesh is failing. " He who liveth, and behold He was " dead, and is alive again, and liveth for " evermore, and hath the keys of death and " hell," will not disappoint thy unfeigned dependence upon the blood of his cross. If the full use of thy reason is preserved, thy

faith shall cheer thy heart. The time would fail, but to name the multitude who have triumphed under most afflictive, mortal diseases—who *then* have testified, "there is a GOD, that giveth songs in the night." I myself have seen whole families comforted for their great loss, by the dying behavior of a beloved husband or wife, son or daughter. And surely, for our own sakes, we should wish to die in peace, when our tender affections will otherwise greatly distress us, and the taking final leave of dearest relations, add much to our sufferings.

May the Reader and Writer of these lines feel, and those around us see, that even when we are dying, we are saved out of the hands of death. How shall we then magnify the horn of salvation, and confirm the faith of those who have believed in his name! Our memory shall thus in the noblest manner, be engraven on the hearts of relations and friends, who will be taught to connect with our departure, a lively idea of their blessedness, "who die in the LORD."

## CHAP. XXI.

*On the Covenant of Grace.*

THE Reader may understand, from what has been offered, how well that grand title of Horn of salvation, becomes the LORD: since he redeems his people from the curse of the law: from the dominion of Satan; from the power of this evil world; from their innate corruption; from death itself, and the grave.

This salvation of sinners, in number as the drops of dew, we are authorized to affirm, is the grandest manifestation of the glory of GOD, *Ephes.* iii. 10. 1 *Pet.* i. 12. A scheme of divine beneficence, reaching in its saving efficacy from the first offence in paradise, to the day of CHRIST's second appearance—promised to *Adam*, and afterwards established with *Abraham* and his seed, by a covenant and oath from GOD.

Thus supremely great is the idea, which *Zacharias* teaches us to conceive of this af-

fair, by declaring that the horn of salvation was raised up.

"To perform the mercy promised to our "fathers, and to remember his holy Cove- "nant: The oath which He sware to our "father *Abraham*, that he would grant unto "us, That we being delivered out of the "hands of our enemies, might serve Him "without fear, in holiness and righteousness "before Him, all the days of our life."

Observe, the coming of CHRIST, is called *mercy* to the fathers: by parity of reason, it must be so to all the faithful before his birth, no less than to them. Accordingly, the scripture saith, "His blood was shed for the re- "mission of sins which are past," and "for "the redemption of transgressions, which "were under the first testament." Nor was it unknown to the fathers, or the faithful, that they were to be saved in the LORD: for though the Jews in general, like Christians, grovelling in earthly pursuits, only expected a Messiah, who would exalt their depressed nation to the height of temporal dominion; yet the spiritual seed always looked for a spiritual Redeemer. "They saw the

" promises (of CHRIST) afar off, and were " persuaded of them, and embraced them, " counting themselves pilgrims and strangers " here below."

So deeply were the fathers indebted to GOD for his grace, that they serve as examples of obedience to the Christian church. Yet neither *Abel*'s righteous works, nor *Enoch*'s walk with GOD; neither *Noah*'s dauntless courage in standing forth a preacher of righteousness to the world of the ungodly, nor *Abraham*'s most illustrious faith, could have preserved them from perishing. Notwithstanding their good qualities, they must have died in their sins, had they not found redemption in the blood of CHRIST.— Through Him they obtained every excellency which adorns their names; the precious faith in which they lived and died, with the crown of glory at the end of their warfare. All was dispensed to them on the Savior's account, through their relation to Him: for pretensions of any kind to such favors from their own obedience, they had none. They were sinners ready to perish, when GOD was pleased to choose and call them by his grace;

at their best estate polluted; and in exalting them to paradise, mercy rejoiced against judgment: for at all times "the wages of "sin was death, and eternal life the gift of "GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord."

*Zacharias*, therefore, by calling the Redemption, *Mercy to the fathers*, plainly teaches, in harmony with all scripture, that the salvation of those who for goodness stand at the top of their species, is still all of grace.—Boasting is excluded: no idea of human merit is to be found; the whole glory of delivering them, as much as others, from the wrath to come, must be ascribed "to "the Lamb that was slain."

This chief Mercy, at first promised, without particularly specifying the spiritual blessings it comprised, was afterwards ratified with *Abraham* and his seed by a Covenant. And when he, at the divine command, instantly offered up in sacrifice his son, his only son *Isaac*, whom he loved; in honor of that amazing act of faith, GOD was pleased to confirm the holy Covenant with an Oath. In both transactions, subsequent scriptures declare, (*Gal.* iv. 28. *Heb.* vi. 17.) *Abraham*

stood as the Representative, and Father of all the Faithful; every individual of which immense society, was no less included in the Covenant and Oath, than the Patriarch himself.

The Covenant was gradually unfolded by the prophets, till at the distance of a thousand years from *Abraham*, *Jeremiah* published the following ample account of it:

"This shall be the Covenant that I will "make with the house of *Israel*, after those "days, saith the LORD; I will put my law "in their inward parts, and write it in their "hearts, and will be their GOD, and they "shall be my people.—And they shall teach "no more every man his neighbor, and every "man his brother, saying, Know the LORD; "for they shall all know me, from the least "of them unto the greatest of them, saith "the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, "and I will remember their sin no more," *Jer.* xxxi. 33, 34.

What tender mercy, and infinite condescension was it in the LORD GOD, thus to bind himself, under the most solemn engagement, to save his people! All this was done

in pity to their slowness of heart in believing upon the force of a single declaration, though from JEHOVAH Himself. Well He knew what distress the guilty feel, when they behold the glory of his majesty, and the purity of his nature; when they understand the detestable qualities of sin, and the high aggravations which have attended their own offences in particular. — What dismaying thoughts possess the mind, when men perceive the devices of Satan; the force of natural lusts in soliciting forbidden gratification: the bewitching allurements in sensual objects: the torrent of evil custom, their own impotence, and the deceitfulness of the human heart: Yet against all these hostile armies combined together, must they constantly urge their way to heaven, if ever they arrive there. Well the LORD GOD knew what must be the impression from these things, upon minds become sensible of their exposed condition:—sensible of the obstacles, dangers, and enemies before them.—Either they must throw off all concern for salvation, in despair of success, or be perpetually harassed with the dread of perishing by

their foes at last: for if in these circumstances, salvation were no more than promised to him that should overcome, and endure to the end; this would contribute very little to relieve their distress, because the interesting painful question would still force itself upon their minds, "But who is sufficient for these things?" And after the least wilful deviation from duty, or advantage gained over them by the enemy, they would be led to say, If we could not stand, how shall we arise when fallen? For these conditional promises, though necessary to define the character of the people of GOD, and confront abusers of the doctrines of grace, in no degree *insure* success. But this is the very blessing, which our tempted, exposed, and assaulted condition requires. As a ground of confidence towards GOD in these perilous circumstances, the church needs, what the armies of *Israel* enjoyed in old time, an absolute promise, "that their "enemies should fall before them in battle."

When the Promise, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, are given for this great purpose, and received by faith, his people can meet

all their foes, numerous, mighty, subtil, and successful too as they have been, without dismay; can endure the hardships of war with patience; — can confidently expect a favorable turn, when all seems to be against them; — can renew the charge, though wounded and driven back, depending upon the succour they shall assuredly receive: and plead for it with growing importunity as dangers press; till they come off more than conquerors; singing, "Not unto us, not unto "us, but unto thy name be all the praise, "for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth's "sake."

Without this holy Covenant, and Oath of GOD, to ascertain beyond failure the salvation of his people, Redemption itself wants a solid foundation to rest on, and must be defeated: for how should those be able to cope with the tempter, more than a match for *Adam* in paradise, who are destitute of his original righteousness? How, without positive assurance of all-sufficient help from GOD, are they to presume they shall conquer an army of foes, stronger by many de-

grees, than that which vanquished our first father in all his unimpaired strength?

But thanks be to GOD for a better Covenant, established upon new and better promises! He has rejoiced the hearts of his people with the certainty of final victory.—He has left upon record his unchangeable purpose to save their souls, in the following express terms:

"GOD, willing more abundantly to shew "unto the heirs of promise, the immutabi- "lity of his counsel, confirmed it by an "Oath, that by two immutable things, in "which it was impossible for GOD to lie, "we might have a strong consolation, who "have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the "hope set before us: which hope we have, "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and "stedfast, which entereth into that within "the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us "entered, even JESUS, made an high priest "for ever, after the order of *Melchisedec*," Heb. vi.

The same idea of complete Redemption, *Zacharias* teaches in this prophecy: for the

horn of salvation was raised up, that the people of GOD, "being delivered out of the "hands of their enemies," and assured of glory by the Covenant and Oath of JEHOVAH, "might serve Him without fear, in "holiness and righteousness before Him, all "the days of their life."

Behold the utmost wish of upright Christians! an absolute security that they shall persevere in dutiful allegiance, and uncorrupted affection to the LORD; neither seduced by sensual allurements, nor supplanted by the deceit of the subtil, nor overpowered by the assaults of the mighty;—but having their heads covered in the day of battle, shall return victorious from the hard-fought field, to be unto their GOD for a name, and for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off.

All, all this is absolutely secured in behalf of the people of GOD: for they are "visited, "redeemed, and delivered" by the horn of salvation "out of the hands of their enemies, "that they may serve," and his Word and Oath are given that they shall serve Him in holiness, in devout observance of all his or-

dinances : thankful for their deliverance ; acknowledging his righteous dominion by unfeigned obedience ; ascribing not unto themselves, but to his grace alone, all the good that is done in them and by them ; zealous for his honor, and active in advancing his cause.

His people have also infallible security, that "they shall serve Him *in righteousness ;*" that is, in the practice of sincerity and truth, justice, kindness, and charity towards all men, "especially the brethren,"—*All the days of their life ;*—in the constant tenor of their conduct—*before the Lord,* from pure motives; not such as pride or hyprocrisy, desire of praise, or mercenary self-love, suggest.

Such is the scripture character of the people of GOD. What can be conceived more excellent ? To serve the LORD, is the glory of angels ; to serve Him as they do, full of reverence, yet free from slavish fears, or painful suspicions, is the privilege of his people. To wear the royal livery of "holiness "to the LORD ;" amidst all their infirmities, temptations, and enemies, still persevering

in obedience, is their high distinction. Such a charming idea, the inspired writers unanimously teach us to conceive of the mystical body of CHRIST, which is his Church.

## CHAP. XXII.

### *On the Knowledge of Salvation.*

THE doctrine of this prophecy, proves the mistake of accounting the knowledge of Salvation, wild enthusiasm, spiritual pride, and blasphemous presumption, as it is common to do. For a present deliverance from the curse of the Law, the dominion of Satan, the World and the Flesh, wrought by the power of the LORD, in consequence of a Covenant and an Oath, for the benefit of his church, insuring their perseverance "in holiness and righteousness all the days of their "life," is a demonstration, that they shall never perish; and, according to express testimony of holy writ, designed to be so understood and believed.

I beg leave, therefore, to offer some proofs in favor of a doctrine, which, from the beginning, has been the glory and triumph of Christians, though now, with other considerable parts of Revelation, fallen into general contempt, and treated with derision.

It is plain then, from many declarations, that GOD greatly delights in the members of CHRIST, as their reconciled Father, and they are commanded so to regard Him. "I say "not unto you, that I will pray the Fa- "ther for you; for the Father himself lov- "eth you, because you have loved me, and "have believed that I came out from GOD." But this paternal love cannot be manifested in temporal blessings; because many of the faithful in every age, are poor, afflicted, and evil-treated. Nor would prosperity satisfy them; because they value and long for Salvation, above all things. With one heart and voice they say, "Thy favor, O GOD, is bet- "ter than life itself." How then can he act towards them the part of a gracious Father, if in a world full of troubles, and incapable of being satisfied with creature-good, they are to be kept in anxious suspense

about their eternal welfare. Yet it must be so, unless they enjoy the knowledge of Salvation; because without this, though the LORD of glory be contemplated hanging on his cross a propitiation for sin; though the promises made to "perseverance in well-do-"ing" be received; and they are now conscious, that "with simplicity and godly sin-"cerity, they have their conversation;" yet since no certainty can be obtained, that they shall be preserved in this state;—since the most sincere at one time, at another may prove most insincere; and true worshippers, may turn out traitors, rebels, apostates.—In circumstances thus to the last degree precarious, what peace can be enjoyed in the service, or family of GOD? What peace when none can be sure, till they join "the "spirits of the just made perfect," that they shall escape "the fire, prepared for the de-"vil, and his angels?"

Should it be said, that upright Christians may have a *good hope*, though no knowledge that they shall be saved: I reply, this must be founded upon the promise of GOD to preserve them, and must cast out

fear, or it will not manifest to them the love of GOD as their reconciled father. But if the foundation of this good hope is the promise of GOD, and the effect strong consolation, there is the full assurance of faith, whether the name be admitted, or not.

Besides; If GOD be the reconciled father of all who are his children by faith in JESUS CHRIST, as the scripture affirms, why are the endearing testimonies of his love, to be withheld from them? When our own children prove their affection to us by cheerful obedience, are we wont to be reserved on our part, in giving them to know the pleasure we take in them? Are we backward in assuring them, that we shall promote their welfare to the utmost of our power? Such tokens of paternal love always invigorate filial affection. "If ye then being evil know "how to give good things unto your chil- "dren, how much more shall your heavenly "father, give the holy Ghost to them who "ask for Him?" The holy Ghost, whose office is to be the seal, the comforter; the earnest and pledge of the eternal inheritance.

How then will those disputers answer it to

GOD, who choose to divest Him of the bowels of a father? who brand with opprobious names, the rich communications of his love to those who walk with him uprightly? who represent Him only in the awful character of moral Governor and Judge of all, sure to make strict inquiry into our conduct, but seem prejudiced strangely against the consequences of that endearing relation of an affectionate parent;—that "his secret should "be with them who fear Him, and that He "should shew them his Covenant;—that he "should come unto them, and make his "abode with them, filling their hearts with "peace and joy in believing, and causing "them to abound in hope, through the "power of the holy Ghost."

But if we are taught to conclude from the goodness of GOD, and his paternal love to the church of CHRIST, that He will give them to know, that they shall certainly be saved, the truth of this conclusion is much more confirmed, when the knowledge of Salvation is proved to be the best preservative from disobedience, and the strongest incitement to lead a holy life. Yet in the very

nature of things, every superabundant manifestation of undeserved love, *when understood*, must have this effect. For though we may abuse and insult mercy exercised towards us, it is only whilst we know not our own deserts. Those who think they have received but little, will love little, whatever favors are bestowed upon them. Those, who contrary to their acknowledged demerit, have received much, will love much; as CHRIST has decided the matter. And "if any man love GOD, he will keep his commandments." Almost incredible are the efforts, which have been made to serve a beloved person, where sense of excellency in the object, has concurred with gratitude for favors received. Such instances are the embellishment of history, the wonder and delight of all mankind*.

* The common people of all nations, even soldiers and sailors, though in general immoral, to a proverb, always shew the force of love upon their hearts towards a compassionate, generous commander. Thousands of his soldiers would sooner sacrifice their lives, than see him perish for want of their help. Nay, if it be but a dog, who has set his heart upon us, there are very few, who feel not themselves constrained by the affection of the

Most strange then would it be, and contrary to the very constitution of our nature, if the manifestation of GOD's everlasting love, to those who know they deserve everlasting destruction (which is the case of all real Christians) should not constrain them to love Him unfeignedly in return, all excellent as He is.

To place us only within the possibility of eternal life, by a conditional ransom (pardon the expression) or to encourage us in the midst of ten thousand foes with a conditional promise, that if we exert ourselves to the end, as we ought, we shall conquer; but without positive assurance of all-sufficient aid to persevere, leaves a dread upon the spirits of falling into endless misery, by a final miscarriage: for we can never tell what a total change of our condition from good to the reverse, a year, or a day may bring forth.—Consequently, if our concern for salvation is strong, we must be agitated like men, whose

poor animal to love him again.—From hence calculate the force with which the knowledge of the everlasting love of GOD towards us, must in its natural tendency operate.

All lies at stake in a most perilous enterprize, where few in comparison escape with their life. What joyous hope, what warmth of gratitude, can ever spring from such a prospect?

Suppose, on the contrary, that GOD for his great love wherewith He loved us, is pleased to make a Covenant, and confirm that Covenant by Oath, that all who really commit their poor, helpless, guilty souls into his hands, who is given for salvation to the ends of the earth, shall, maugre all their enemies, "serve Him in holiness and righte-"ousness before Him all the days of their life," and be raised up every one at the last day.

How forcibly adapted is such a plenary grant to engage the heart in the service of GOD;—to make men fear and tremble before his goodness, feeling something of a sacred horror, when solicited to presumptuous offences! How mighty in efficacy to load them with condemnation, and fill them with a sense of their own vileness, should they commit sin! And thus prove the means of their recovery.

Facts confirm the truth of this reasoning.

We cannot deny the salutary effects, which flow from a manifestation of the everlasting love of GOD to the soul, when we see the wisest, humblest, best of men, made such by this very means. For instance, *Abraham* was an idolater, a *Syrian* ready to perish;—but when JEHOVAH appeared to him, promising to be "his GOD, and "his exceeding great reward," he was ever after the Friend of GOD. *Jacob*, *Moses*, *Samuel*, and *Daniel*, all Christians agree to admire, and are commanded to imitate.—What made them to differ? The love of GOD manifested to them in such an abundant degree. Who does not stand amazed at the lives of the apostles, and above all at the labors of St. *Paul?* yet how few discern the cause of their superior excellency! They all loved much, because they were all assured, that "their names were written in the book "of life;" on which account, CHRIST commanded them to rejoice, and not in their apostolic gifts or authority. He engaged his veracity, that when He left them, He would return again, to receive them to Himself in glory.

The same certainty of everlasting salvation was possessed by the primitive church of CHRIST. Witness the apostle's declaration to the faithful at *Corinth*, that "All their "afflictions were light, and but for a mo- "ment; because *we know*, saith he, that "when our earthly house of this tabernacle "is dissolved, we have a building of GOD, "an house not made with hands, eternal in "the heavens." Witness his forbidding them to go to law before unbelievers, by appealing with surprising boldness to their knowledge that they should judge the world and angels;—be present on thrones of glory to attest the justice of the final sentence passed on all that perish, 1 *Cor.* vi. 2. Witness his commendation of the faithful, for "taking "joyfully the spoiling of their goods, because "they knew in themselves they had a better "and more enduring substance."

Human nature, it is confessed, is at all times the same. And our enemies and temptations are nearly so. Wherefore the same manifestation of the everlasting love of GOD to the soul, which produced in old time such excellent fruits, such unshaken attachment

to GOD, would work in a similar manner at present. And it is upon this account that I conclude we must enjoy now, as fully as the saints of old did, assurance of the love of GOD towards us, in order to make us "fol- "lowers of them who through faith and pa- "tience inherit the promises." Since it seems a thing absolutely impossible that such Christians should love and delight to obey GOD, who think they honor him and commend their own modesty, by denying the knowledge of salvation till the judgment day, or the hour of death; like those who were always confident that to be absent from the body, would prove an immediate translation into the presence of the LORD.

Further it is necessary, that there should be some invaluable privilege appropriated to upright Christians, designed as a means, not only of engaging more strongly their affections to the LORD, but of detecting and confronting false professors of the Christian Faith. This decisive touch-stone is the knowledge of salvation. Talk only of an uncertain hope of going to heaven through the mercy of GOD, and you will find no one

without it. From natural instinct, the basest of men, flatter themselves they shall escape the wrath to come; and conclude they know as much about their future allotment, as any body else does concerning themselves. Wherefore they remain easy and presumptuous, in gross darkness to the last.

But from the doctrine of this prophecy, such self-deceivers may be confronted. Their presumption may be overthrown, by proving, that the faithful enjoy at present an inestimable privilege, to which they are utter strangers.—Propound the knowledge of salvation, built on oaths, and promises, and blood, promised to every member of CHRIST, which they all enjoy, or seek diligently to obtain; immediately the hypocrisy of false professors stands detected, because they are convinced in their own consciences, that this precious gift from heaven belongs not to them. Hence they must confess themselves to be what they are, or deny, against plain scripture evidence, that our heavenly Father is thus bountiful to his children. Wherefore in all the resentment which envious self-interest can excite, they blaspheme the know-

ledge of salvation, unable to bear the sight it gives them, of their own poverty and misery, as Cain was to endure the divine favor manifested to his righteous brother, full of faith.

I add further it is perfectly rational to conclude, that different motives to obey GOD predominate in the different states, through which we must pass in our way to heaven. Fear of wrath, like the rod to little children, is of great use, in alarming conscience, in working by the principle of self preservation upon captive sinners to cry mightily for deliverance. Yet much more excellent principles afterwards actuate the faithful, because what proceeds only from servile fear, and mercenary self-love, all mankind despise. How much more then must GOD reject it as refuse? Yet so long as we live uncertain whether we shall be saved, higher motives to obey GOD can scarcely take place in our breasts: because if the weight of eternal things is duly felt, but the issue remains in absolute suspense, we must fear more than love; dread more the punishment of sin than hate its properties;—obey more in order to

gain eternal life, than from delight in GOD, or his Commandments. And is not this to be very mean, and selfish, and mercenary; that is, unholy to the last? No services whatsoever, springing from such base principles can honor either the law, or the lawgiver. In the midst of all we can do, with these views, we only resemble the monkey, who refrains from breaking the china for fear of the whip, or is in very good humor for the sake of the nuts!

But this reproach has no place, when we have received by faith, the promise, covenant, and oath of GOD, "that we shall serve Him "all the days of our life, in holiness "and righteousness before Him." Obedience in this case springs from gratitude and true nobility of mind. It is obedience, in quality the same as that which angels pay, obedience to the perfect law of liberty. "The will of "GOD is done on earth, as it is done in "heaven," not for any advantage to be gained—but because the Lord is "worthy to re-"ceive glory, and honor and power. Wor-"thy is the Lamb that was slain, for he hath "redeemed us to GOD with his blood."

These are some of the solid reasons why we believe that upright Christians may know that they shall certainly be saved. The charge therefore of wild enthusiasm, so audaciously published by many modern divines against the full assurance of faith, proves a charge derogatory in the highest degree to the goodness of GOD, towards his church; it is injurious to the cause of holiness; contradicts repeated declarations of scripture; and robs the faithful of the noblest motives to obey their GOD.

## CHAP. XXIII.

*A further Defence of the full Assurance of Faith.*

THE reproach cast upon the church of CHRIST, as guilty of wild enthusiasm, in maintaining the knowledge of salvation, has been proved groundless.—No less so, is the charge of spiritual pride: for there is no pride in being absolutely certain of what GOD has been pleased to bestow. Is it pride

in us to maintain, that we are greatly distinguished in the place of our nativity above slaves, Jews, Turks, and Idolators? And why may we not possess, and know we do so, spiritual as well as temporal privileges, without self-exaltation?

Besides, all who believe, have already received in CHRIST himself, an infinitely richer gift than everlasting salvation. If it be no pride therefore in his church, to be certain He hath died for them, it can be none in them to affirm, that they shall be saved through his death: because the favor of being enabled to lead a holy life, and at the end of it to admission into heaven, is as nothing, compared to redemption by the blood of the Son of GOD. If you have not known and believed this before, attend to an obvious proof of it.

What GOD is pleased to fix our attention upon, as the highest expression of his love, must be beyond all comparison his richest gift. But our GOD never says, He so loved the world as to provide a future state of reward for the righteous, but so as "*to give*

" *his only begotten Son*, to the end that all " who believe in him should not perish but " have everlasting life." *Herein* is love—*Herein* is it commended, that " He gave his Son to be " the propitiation for our sins :" who died for us, when we were enemies to GOD.—" Rivers of pleasure at his right hand " for evermore," the scripture supposes, must be their inheritance, for whose redemption a price above all price has been paid. If this be denied, what force of conclusion, or idea of truth, can be found in St. *Paul*'s reasoning? " If when we were enemies, we " were reconciled to GOD by the death of " his Son ; *much more*, being reconciled, we " shall be saved by his life? He that spared " not his own Son, but delivered Him up for " us all, how shall He not *with Him also*, " freely give us all things?"

When the faithful therefore affirm their knowledge of Salvation, they only conclude, that He who loved them so much as to give his own Son for them, when in rebellion against Him, will not, after they have laid down their arms, ever love them so little, as to cast them into hell :—that " He who en-

" dured the cross, despising the shame," for the joy of saving their souls, will not afterwards see them perish, for want of sanctifying grace.

Were so great a privilege, as the knowledge of Salvation, said to be acquired through any goodness in themselves, or secured by their own superior wisdom or power, it might be called spiritual pride. But when all is ascribed to the Promise, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, to Him alone is the whole glory given. They only make a just estimate of their own state, as He hath been pleased repeatedly to declare, and solemnly confirm it: " For if children, then " heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with " CHRIST JESUS." And if his faithful people must not believe their salvation stands absolutely secured upon this sure foundation, for fear of spiritual pride, they must, in order to be humble, regard the strongest engagements, which GOD Himself can give, with doubt and suspicion.

To the charge of wild enthusiasm, and spiritual pride, against those, who maintain the knowledge of Salvation is a privilege of

the Christian church, that of blasphemous presumption is generally joined; but without cause. For when men promise great favors, and to exclude the most distant ground for suspicion, stipulate to perform them; who ever calls it presumption in the parties to whom the promises are made, to conclude all will be fulfilled? We should think this still more unjust, when the ability, character, and fidelity of the promiser, add confirmation to the security.

If then the most High promises, covenants, and swears by Himself, that his people "be-" ing delivered out of the hands of their ene-" mies, shall serve Him in holiness and " righteousness before Him, all the days of " their life;" can it be blasphemous presumption in them to conclude assuredly, that He will not falsify his Word, alter his Covenant, and perjure Himself, by not bestowing the promised blessings upon them?

Again, What should we think if an affectionate parent had not only subdued the enemies of his children, but left each of them at his death, by will, a rich inheritance; by a will valid in law, and pleadable by every one

of his heirs therein specified? Should we not say, it is the intention of the testator, that when this will is opened and read to them, they should look upon the estate as their own? But such is the case of CHRIST and his church, as stated at large in holy writ, to help our infirmities in conceiving of spiritual things.

"Because the children were partakers of "flesh and blood, He also took part of the "same;" and shed his blood to confirm to them a testamentary right to the legacy He hath bequeathed them; which, for this reason, He calls "the blood of the New Testa- "ment." He is Himself "the Mediator of "the New Testament, that by means of "death, for the redemption of the trans- "gressions which were under the first testa- "ment, they which are called, might receive "the promise of eternal inheritance."

The reality, therefore, of this Will and Testament cannot be set aside, without disgracing our LORD and his Apostle, by interpreting away the efficacy of his death. But till this is set aside, it can be no presumption in the heirs to claim their inheritance under

that divine Testament, and be certain they shall receive it in all its fulness.

Should it be said (which, as far as I can understand, is the only remaining objection) that none can know they are themselves the heirs. I reply, this is an imputation upon the wisdom and goodness of our Maker, almost equal to the denial of the Testament itself. For we read in scripture, that GOD has made a Covenant, or Grant unto his people, which stands confirmed by his Oath, and ratified by the blood of CHRIST.—All this we read was done, that those who flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in CHRIST JESUS, might have two immutable things to trust to, and derive from thence a strong consolation. But how can this be, when no one is to know, that the benefit of this Covenant and Oath belongs to Himself? It might full as well have never been given: for how trifling is the difference between no Covenant and Oath, and between a Covenant and Oath to which no one can infallibly lay claim? And this objection is the more reproachful, and the more weak, because the holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth,

is sent "to seal the faithful to the day of re-"demption, and to teach them to know the "the things, which are freely given unto them "of GOD." So that if none of the church of CHRIST can know they shall be saved, then neither the Love, Promise, Covenant, and Oath of the Father—neither the Life, Death, Intercession, and Grace of the Son, taught and confirmed by the Testimony of the holy Spirit, are a sufficient foundation for the knowledge of Salvation. They cannot be safely depended on. Is not this a blasphemous absurdity?

Beware, therefore, how you take liberty to abuse the church of CHRIST, for maintaining their high privilege: since in so doing, you reflect equal dishonor on the office each Person in the blessed Trinity bears in the plan of Salvation. Expose with what severity you please every base pretender to this unspeakable grace, and we will, we do join with you. Men whose air and talk bewray forwardness and self-conceit, and evil tempers confute their high pretensions. Object to the making assurance of our eternal felicity, or interest in CHRIST, essential to

the faith of a Christian. We will allow the difference between weak and strong believers. But let not the truth itself, the glory of the church of CHRIST, the superabundant loving kindness of GOD, be denied, reproached, and blasphemed, on account of many impostors. Amidst the arts of subtil disputants against CHRIST, and the miserable wranglings of professed believers about the meaning of his words, attempt not to rob humble souls of what alone can carry them above all perplexity, the full assurance of understanding, faith and hope. Attempt not to bereave the excellent of his flock of their joy in waiting for the dawn of eternity, by telling them, assurance is wild enthusiasm, and spiritual pride. Level not the children of light and of the day, with hypocrites and infidels in this most interesting matter, the *knowledge* of their future allotment. Nor go on to encourage all lazy, ignorant, wicked professors of Christianity with this soothing falshood, that none upon earth know that their sins are forgiven, and their souls shall be saved.

You cannot oppose the doctrine of the full assurance of faith, without maintaining

it is for the honor of GOD, and the good of men, that upright Christians should remain in darkness, or doubt; contrary to what has been proved by scripture testimony.

I would proceed one step further, and intreat you to examine, whence such violent prejudice against the knowledge of Salvation takes its rise? Not from good-will to men—because the lot of humanity, calls loudly for such a healing balm, for such refuge in life and death;—not from zeal for GOD, or the honor of his word, because this exceedingly exalts the grace of GOD, and unspeakably enhances the value of Revelation;—not from a well-informed regard for holy practice, because the holiest of men possessed the knowledge of Salvation themselves, and earnestly urged all whom they taught, "to make their "calling and election *sure*." But if violent prejudice against this doctrine, cannot take its rise either from love to GOD, or man, or holiness, beware it does not spring from a desire to pacify conscience alarmed with the report, that others are so much more favored than yourself; or from gross ignorance, not having devoutly searched the Oracles of

GOD; or from envy, which cannot allow those privileges to be possessed by another, which we possess not ourselves.

## CHAP. XXIV.

### *On the Abuse of the Covenant of Grace.*

THE doctrine of this Prophecy, proves the fatal mistake of many religious professors. They justly affirm, that the Promise, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, are an infallible security, that not one of the Elect shall perish. But at the same time, they seem strangely reserved and cool upon the point of serving the LORD "in holiness and "righteousness before Him all the days of "their life:"—As if this was not as much secured, the means as the end, and no less a blessing. They will speak perpetually of the infirmities, spots, and falls of the Elect; so that one is at a loss to discern any holiness in them, or any benefit they derive from

CHRIST, except that of escaping the flames of hell at last.

This is a mistake, which it behoves every preacher and hearer of the Doctrines of Grace carefully to avoid, and zealously oppose; because it is very common to charge both with weakening the obligations to obedience, and making CHRIST a minister of sin.—And where the Doctrines of Grace are taught, Satan has no other resource to uphold his tottering throne, than that of beguiling men to imagine the everlasting Covenant will afford protection, if not to Antimonian rebellion, yet to carelessness, formality, and sloth. At the same time it must be confessed, that from the Apostles days to our own, this utmost stretch of human depravity has appeared, wherever the scripture doctrines have been maintained. Some of the most false, proud, lewd, covetous, and oppressive of mankind, each practising his iniquity till death, have been fierce advocates for the everlasting Covenant, though enjoying not one blessing from it.

*It is necessary on all these accounts,* to alledge several proofs that every religious

professor, who fancies himself excused in any degree from serving the LORD "in holiness "and righteousness," under pretence of being safe in the everlasting Covenant, is a miserable self-deceiver, an hypocrite, and traitor in the church of CHRIST, against various indisputable testimonies of his guilt and prevarication. He is thus guilty against the plainest testimony of the Covenant itself, of which he makes his odious boast; for this is *holy*—an absolute grant of knowledge, power, and grace to his people, enabling them to serve the LORD acceptably.—"I will put my laws into their "mind, and write them in their hearts.— "They shall be to me a people, and I will "be to them a GOD."—Wherefore the circumstance of slightly regarding personal obedience, instantly stamps a man's character, no less than calling JESUS accursed.—It proves him to be an alien to the Covenant; —it convicts him of imposture upon the spot, in laying claim to that divine grant, which is the promise and certain means of sanctification, himself remaining unsanctified.

The *end and design* also of the Covenant

and Oath, no less than their nature, bear clear testimony against such a religious professor, as an hypocrite. For both are proofs of the immutable purpose of GOD, to save his people in a way of holiness, which proofs they greatly need. To them, Sin is the greatest evil.—They walk in a steep and slippery path, beset with snares, and infested with watchful, cruel foes. So that they would be utterly disheartened, through the grievousness of the way, were they not comforted by gracious engagements from GOD in their behalf. All dependence, therefore, upon the Covenant and Oath, for any other purpose or view, than to serve the LORD with full assurance of success, is a barefaced perversion of the express design for which both were revealed. It is like perverting the proclamation of Salvation in CHRIST, the grand encouragement for sinners to return to GOD, into a reason to hope for Salvation, though we never return to Him at all.

The Covenant and Oath were given for the benefit of brave soldiers, to make them continue such, not to screen one scoundrel

coward ;—to cheer true-hearted, manly sufferers for the sake of their Commander. What is this to a traitor, who holds correspondence with his foes, and favors them? Such an one is proved *upon the clearest evidence* an impostor, when he pretends to trust in the Covenant, and should be treated accordingly.

Religious professors of this cast deceive themselves, in contradiction to the practice of the most excellent, who have received the Covenant and Oath of GOD, as an infallible security to his church, that they should be saved. Who speaks so fully on the high subjects of Predestination and Election, from whence the Covenant springs, as St. *Paul?* But did He slight personal obedience? Did He watch, did he pray, did he mortify sin, or labor less in the service of his LORD, on *this* account? Did He not appeal to the witnesses of his life, and the searcher of his heart, how holily, how justly, how unblameably He behaved?

What use did the primitive believers make of the Election of Grace, and of the everlasting Covenant, which St. *Paul* preached?

Did they think slightly of personal obedience? On the contrary, see how he exults in the sanctifying virtue of this doctrine.—The believers at *Rome* were spoken of, he tells us, through all the Christian societies in the empire, for the obedience of their faith. And he returns ardent thanks to GOD for the churches of *Thessalonica*, which were his glory, and examples to all them that believed in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*.

There are great numbers also to this hour, who reap the same glorious advantage from the everlasting Covenant.—Their discourse is profitable and animating; their watchfulness and self-denial, striking; their cordial regard to the duties of their station, and their humility, beautiful in the eyes of all around them.

Now either these venerable witnesses did not understand the nature, design, and end of the everlasting Covenant, or every careless professor of faith in it, must grosly deceive himself, must be full of hypocrisy.

Such an unhappy mistake is also made against the testimony of Conscience, which can enjoy no peace with GOD, but in obedience

to his will. For, though some evil workers boldly affirm the Covenant is their sure protection, no *lively* hope springs from hence. —It may stupify, like false dependence on the infinite mercy of GOD, so common in the world—but it can do no more; because the Bible is the pretended warrant, from whence such hypocrites would draw this conclusion in their own favor. But the Bible denounces wrath against all workers of iniquity, in terms to the full as plain, as those which assert the infallible salvation of the Elect. Now it is not in the power of man so firmly to believe one part of the Book of GOD, as from thence to be *easy* with respect to eternity; and yet so firmly disbelieve at the same time, another part of the same unerring volume, as not to dread the wrath it denounces to our condemnation.—Besides, peace of conscience is the gift of GOD, which hypocrites can never receive: because He is of purer eyes than to dwell with evil. He ever frowns upon the rebellious, and under that frown, every heart not hardened to perdition, must ache.

Even large experience of his love, joined

to clear knowledge of the adorable plan of Salvation, makes no difference at all in this matter. No sooner can sin be deliberately committed by those who are justified, and shall certainly be saved, than the soul instantly suffers, as the body does by a stroke of the palsy. The divine presence withdraws, the love and glory of CHRIST become obscured ; — condemnation fills the conscience. The hands which would now lay hold on the Covenant, shake and tremble :—distressing doubts and fears, whether all past experience has not been a delusion, strongly assail the mind. Prayer is without access to GOD, or any comfort, till brokenness of heart begins, and sincere lamentation for the offence, till the LORD has been often and earnestly besought to heal the backsliding, and restore comfort to the mourner.

All these particulars we read in the case of scripture saints, after they had been overtaken with a fault.—We find them recorded in the lives of the most excellent ;—and they are experienced by every member of CHRIST, whenever betrayed or surprised into any evil thing, contrary to the tenor of his upright conduct.

And till GOD ceases to be holy, to be jealous, to love his people, and promote their interest, these things must be so. Otherwise, He would encourage them to despise his holy authority, and lightly regard committing, what his soul abhorreth. Consequently, all religious professors who trifle with sin, or think little of the absolute necessity of bringing forth fruit unto holiness, under pretence that they are safe in the Covenant, either know nothing of the grievous self-reproach and distress which ingenuous minds feel upon offending GOD; or foaming out their own shame, speak as if there was no other reason to refrain from sin, than to escape the misery of hell. Provided therefore infernal misery can be avoided, it is of small moment, whether GOD be pleased or provoked. Is not this the very sentiment and temper of an hypocrite unmasked?

Such religious Professors deceive themselves against the clearest testimony of the absolute necessity of personal holiness, in order to enjoy heaven itself. All pleasure springs from suitableness in the object, to the faculty which it gratifies. Sounds full

of sweetest melody can give no pleasure to the palate, nor delicious food to the ear, from want of this correspondence. For the very same reason, a place of perfect purity, cannot possibly yield satisfaction to the unclean. The presence of holy angels, and an holy GOD, have nothing in them to please such fallen spirits, but all to confound them. We see some, *even upon earth*, so divinely changed, that the slaves of sin are under restraint and awe before them. What then must be the effect of infinite sanctity? There can be no passage from a state of natural depravity, to an immediate possession of glory. Sinners must first come as living stones, and be built up in CHRIST, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to GOD by Him: in which holy education, the very temper and constitution of heaven is obtained. The whole scripture teaches this truth, but never more clearly, than in the passages, which assert the doctrine of Predestination. In one, believers are said to be "chosen before the foundation of the world, "that they might be holy:" In another, that

they are "predestinated to be conformed to "the image of CHRIST:"—In a third, that "those whom GOD foreknew, are chosen, "through sanctification of the Spirit, and "belief of the truth." So that as the faculty of reason is necessary to qualify men for communion in society, no less necessary is love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity, "to make them meet for the inhe-"ritance of the saints in light."

The scripture affirms, I *allow*, that there is a very wide difference, amongst the members of CHRIST, in the degrees of their personal obedience. Some bring forth an hundredfold, some only thirty. Yet all possess excellent knowledge, lively faith, and love unfeigned, from which they conscientiously obey.

Hence personal obedience, is constantly declared to be the distinguishing mark of the people of GOD. See how their excellent character is drawn in the 119th *Psalm*.—"They are undefiled in the way, and walk "in the law of the LORD:—They seek Him "with their whole heart:—They do no ini-"quity: They esteem all GOD's precepts

" concerning all things to be right, and hate " every false way." There would be no end of repeating testimonies from all the prophets, that " the way of the Just is uprightness."

But let us hear the Savior Himself:—" If " any man love me, he will keep my words." He will will not only talk of my glory, or shed tears at the relation of my sorrows, which the vilest have been known to do, but he will reverence my authority; and, as my friend, do whatsoever I command him.

What impudent impostors then ought those religious professors ever to be accounted, who, like *Judas*, eat and drink at the LORD's table, profess to have the clearest light and knowledge of his will, and then say, or seem to say, that sin in the Elect, is a matter not greatly to be abhorred.

Such religious professors deceive themselves, against strong evidence of the misery inseparable from known transgression. To live in the breach of any commandment of GOD, is necessarily to be wretched;—because every one of them is given *only* for

our good always. Obedience to Him in faith, humility, and love; in meekness, patience, and entire resignation; in mercy and kindness to every creature, are all peaceful, pleasing sensations; their opposites irksome to bear. Perseverance and watchfulness in earnest prayer, diligence in searching the scripture, and using every means of grace, cause the faithful to abound in spiritual blessings, as vernal showers cover the earth with plenteous fruits. On the contrary, from laziness, formality, or levity, we become barren, confused, and dark in our minds; unable to withstand temptation;—unable to bear the cross, and strangers to all delight in GOD.

Let the most exemplary Christian give way to passion, or defile himself by lasciviousness; let him do an unjust thing for gain, or neglect stated prayer in secret; presently a melancholy change will be perceived by others, or felt at least in his own soul. He will neither be able to speak for GOD, or pray to him, as he was wont to do. The Election of Grace, the Covenant and Oath

of GOD, neither prevent nor diminish these dreadful effects, which follow, and punish wilful disobedience in every degree.

And can you be satisfied in such a state of soul? Suppose you had a patent from heaven, that you should certainly be saved twenty years hence; but from this hour should know no communion with GOD in fervent prayer, in deep humiliation for sin, in joyful gratitude for his mercies, in love and obedience without dissimulation.—On the contrary, that you should remain proud, impatient, passionate, obscene;—a miser or a drunkard, a murmurer and complainer, or an idle consumer of your precious time, till a few days before you expired. Would it please you to receive salvation in this no legal way, rather than "in holiness and "righteousness before the LORD all the "days of your life?" No one upon earth, has face enough, I should think, to avow so shameful a choice. Yet know, that if any branch of personal obedience, or means of attaining higher degrees of holiness, which GOD has appointed, be by you despised,

presuming on the Covenant and Oath of GOD in behalf of his Elect, this is actually in a measure your own choice.

But if none of these proofs, already advanced against self-deceiving professors of religion, who abuse the doctrines of Grace, are regarded, there is still one consideration to be addressed to their self-love. Such persons pretend they are confident of their safety. Yet they cannot be safe, until the Judge of all becomes changeable as we are: for his whole mind on this head is fully revealed; there is no room left for a doubt. Whom does He compare to the stony ground, and to the seed sown among thorns; to foolish virgins, and slothful servants? Professors of faith in his name, who were weak and wicked enough to imagine, his grace would prove a sanctuary to protect them from the punishment of their sins, although continued in from this false confidence. To make this delusion appear the more dangerous, our LORD Himself draws the character of some eminent professors of faith and ministers, in his church. They were men, who wrought miracles before the unbelieving world, to

glorify his name, and enlarge his kingdom. —Yet these splendid gifts, so beneficial to others, do not prevent the loss of their own souls. When they plead in the great day, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and "in thy name have cast out devils, and in "thy name done many mighty works? Then "will I declare unto them, saith the LORD, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye "workers of iniquity."

How decisive a proof is this scripture, were there no other, that we cherish a fatal presumption, when we plead the everlasting Covenant in excuse for unfruitfulness in the service of GOD! No, if we cannot appeal to Him, that we watch, and pray, and keep his commandments, our hearts are false.— We hear before our trial, what must be our doom. Neither can we believe the words of the LORD, thus plain and peremptory, yet fancy ourselves amongst the Elect: for a wicked or an idle servant, is a contradiction to every character given of *them* by the holy Ghost.

Whenever, therefore, upon professing to be convinced of the truth of the doctrines

of Grace, you entertain slight notions of the absolute necessity of holiness, begin to neglect secret prayer, or use the means of Grace, without prizing them highly;—whenever you delight to hear of final perseverance, and finished salvation, but feel secret disgust when urged to "present yourselves a living sacri-"fice unto GOD;" be assured you grosly mistake the nature,—you pervert the design of the holy Covenant. Cry to GOD, if the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven.

Thus the fatal mistake, too often found amongst religious professors, who receive the scripture doctrines of Predestination and Election, but disregard personal obedience, stands confuted upon their own principles. Since upon these principles, such a construction of the everlasting Covenant, is a flagrant contradiction to the testimony of conscience; to the essential character of a disciple of CHRIST; to the generation of the faithful in all ages; and must certainly, if persisted in to the last, bring on everlasting destruction, according to our LORD's declarations. These various proofs are not to be

resisted, but by that hypocrisy, which is capable of abusing, and turning into poison, every scheme of religion which GOD can propose.

These proofs of the absolute necessity of holiness, in full consistency with the doctrines of Grace, sufficiently secure obedience;—because by these proofs, CHRIST and his Apostles, confront and expose hypocrites.—They do not ever, as I remember, deny, that the church of CHRIST is accepted in Him, and complete: justified through faith once for all, without the deeds of the law. In this manner, they defended the truth against all charges of licentiousness, which, from the beginning, were against it.

And every other scheme for promoting holiness, will do, *in the end,* much more mischief than service to the cause of holiness. For every other scheme, establishes the old Covenant upon the ruins of the new;—makes the righteousness of faith, give place to the righteousness of the law;—deeply shades the glory of the Redeemer's life and death;—robs his church of the strongest and purest motives to obedience; and, *in the*

*conclusion*, as certainly overthrows the gospel, as Antinomian blasphemy itself. The only difference between the Popish doctrine of a second justification by works, and Antinomian abuse of the doctrines of Grace, the two extremes, lies here:—The plan of a second final justification by works, produces an apostacy from CHRIST by slow degrees and fair appearances, thus beguiling the simple. Antinomians, with their heaven-daring falshoods, too gross for any but abandoned hypocrites to bear, stab the gospel to the heart at once, in the face of the sun.

## CHAP. XXV.

*On the Error of exalting Morality, to the Disparagement of Faith and Holiness.*

THE doctrine of this Prophecy, proves clearly this fatal mistake. Yet what confident pretensions to merit! What self-satisfaction do we see many take in the sup-

posed sufficiency of honesty and benevolence, who, notwithstanding, possess but a very small share of these excellent qualities:—insensible, it seems, that Moralists (as they affect to call themselves) who serve not the LORD in holiness, are of all men most *unjust*, are enemies to mankind in several capital respects; direct opposers of GOD; and incapable of admission into heaven, without an entire change of heart.

Profane moralists are the most unjust of men;—because the highest degree of injustice, is to defraud our greatest Benefactor. But our greatest Benefactor, beyond comparison, is the giver of all we enjoy, and of our every capacity for happiness. Wherefore adoration, esteem, gratitude, humiliation for every offence committed against Him, with supreme love, are *the things which are* GOD's—due to Him by an indefeasible right, positively required from us all. When the Jews of old, withheld from Him the tithes and offerings which were demanded to support the temple-service, where the GOD of *Israel* was worshipped, He accused them in these forcible terms:—"Will a man rob

"GOD? yet this whole nation hath robbed "me."—But if this was robbery of GOD, what is it to annihilate the first and great commandment, under pretence that cordial regard to the temporal welfare of our fellow-creatures is sufficient? To every person who holds this mistake, we may say with the utmost propriety,—"Thou that abhorrest injustice, dost thou commit sacrilege? How ridiculous are all thy pretensions to an high regard for moral conduct, when thou thyself livest in the commission of the basest theft any creature can commit, that of robbing GOD, and teaching others to do the same, yet account themselves good men!"

I prove further, that *Moralists*, by extolling honesty and benevolence, to the disparagement of faith and holiness, are *Enemies* to mankind in several capital respects:—Enemies, by keeping them in gross ignorance of GOD, his works, his gospel and salvation, as if these things were of no consequence;—in teaching them to despise devotion, the source of the best pleasures we can know on earth: without which, every advantage of nature or station, is apt to puff

up; prosperity to intoxicate; and extreme adversity, to plunge into desperation:—without which, solitude proves very irksome; society, full of contention; and every condition of life, dissatisfying:—without which, men of all ranks and orders, are forced to fly to childish sports, to mean, despicable, wicked ways of consuming their short term of life, allotted for nobler purposes.

See your claim, O ye irreligious moralists, to be called benevolent towards your fellow-creatures, considered as individuals; so cruel is your boasted compassion.

Considering them as members of a community, your maxims and practice are in a still greater degree pernicious: for every society under heaven suffers much from the wily and powerful;—because without higher sanction, human laws are easily evaded in a thousand instances. Against this calamity, the fear and love of GOD are our sole defence.—Where these govern, no wrong will be done to man. The whole Creation immediately becomes an object highly respectable, as the workmanship of GOD, whose will is, that none should hurt or destroy.—

Pour contempt on devotional duties, the heaven-appointed means of producing and maintaining the fear and love of GOD, you leave society (notwithstanding your own benevolent example) defenceless against the assaults of our worst passions;—passions, which fill the world with injured women, forced into prostitution for a morsel of bread;—with the cries of defrauded orphans and widows;—with quarrels, enmity, and bloodshed:—for lust, covetousness, and revenge, will seldom be quelled, but by devout supplications to GOD; nor evil desires, the seed of evil actions, resisted, but by those who have conscience toward Him. What amends then, can the strictest regard to equity in your own dealings, or the most generous acts of pecuniary benevolence make to society, for immense mischiefs, sure to follow from slighting religious principle, as if it was a superfluous motive to be good. Do you exclaim in the warmth of your benevolence against doing wrong to a single fellow-creature, and yet prove a malignant to society itself, by tearing up the very foundations on which all restraints of conscience,

respecting GOD, are established? I mean, devotional duties.

Besides, when we consider our real condition as a race of sinful creatures, who can be reconciled to GOD, and saved only in the way which he hath appointed, profane Moralists will be found injurious to mankind, infinitely above the fraudulent and villainous.—These we naturally guard against and detest, though they can only hurt us in our our present transient property;—but profaneness brings on the ruin of our immortal souls, by denying, or despising the command to live a life of faith and holiness.—Moralists, by affecting to know no duty beyond justice and benevolence, erase from the mind of all who regard them, a sense of GOD's government over us.—They teach us to imagine, that faith and devotion belong only to weak bigots.—They lead us to deny every the most important truth He hath revealed; thus rendering us by our profaneness, eternally incapable of admission into that world, where GOD is all in all.

What the end of these Moralists must be, unless they are converted into devout Chris-

tians, a character they now hold in contempt, judge ye, after observing their direct contradiction to the dictates of GOD.

He commands all his people to pray in secret; to pray always; to worship Him, and diligently search the scripture.—Moralists are confident there is no need of so much religion; because men may be very good, without any devotion at all. He dwells upon the absolute necessity of faith, ascribes to this grace a kind of omnipotence, connecting with it everlasting salvation.—Moralists violently dislike laying such a stress upon believing. They substitute, therefore, honesty and benevolence in its place, esteeming these virtues quite sufficient. He, by every turn of expression which can alarm conscience, or persuade, claims supreme love to Himself, as the first instance of duty; pronounces every man, destitute of this divine affection, accursed; strictly charging us, "whether we "eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all "to the glory of GOD." Moralists sneer at the malediction—nauseate so much piety—reproach the terms as being unintelligible; asking, what is meant by the glory of GOD?

—and suppose Him more honored by *their moral conduct*, than by all the prayers and acts of faith in all the saints, since the world was made.

Hence it is evident, that whilst other sins are no more than a breach of some particular branch of duty, profaneness despises the great object of all. Whilst other sins are so many attacks upon different parts of the divine law, profaneness subverts the authority of the whole.—Consequently there cannot be a greater opposition, than is found in Moralists, (as they call themselves) to the majesty and will of GOD; to his truth and ordinances; to the temper of the church on earth, and of the whole company in heaven. None, therefore, can be farther from salvation, none in a state more incapable of admission into the world of everlasting piety and devotion.

That so heavy a charge, should really stand in force against some of the most admired characters among men of the world, is a melancholy reflection. It is more so, that many who call themselves Christians, should be fatally deceived to conclude, strict

integrity, and warm benevolence, the whole duty of man.

Let such very superficial thinkers, learn to examine, by the touchstone of truth, from whence actions proceed, and their natural tendency.—Then, they will no longer most irrationally conclude, *any* action can be truly good, where the *principle* is essentially defective; or any quality in an object, *lovely*, which, upon the whole, proves exceedingly injurious to GOD and man.—How comes the Savior to join the doctrine of the Sadducees with that of the Pharisees? To teach us, that self-sufficient moralists, and devout cheats, are criminals alike:—that prayerless honest men, and hymn-singing villains, are much more nearly related, than either will choose to believe.—For which cause, the same perdition is reserved for hypocrites and unbelievers.

Whenever, therefore, you observe a man despising the house and day of GOD; speaking in terms dishonourable to true devotion and holiness of life, priding himself at the same time in his own favorite sentiment, that an honest man, is the noblest

work of GOD,—pity and pray for him. Be not dazzled by the amiableness of his natural temper, strict adherence to justice, tender humanity, and uncommon benevolence. —Esteem not a profane moralist, on account of these striking qualities, either worthy or innocent, a *good member of society*, much less a Christian. Because these qualities (charming indeed as they are) only enable him to do the more mischief, like vast abilities, and boundless generosity in some mover of sedition. *In him* such virtues are a grievous misfortune to the public: for they put it in his power to spread the baneful infection of profaneness. They make him appear to undiscerning eyes, a noble friend to his fellow-creatures, whilst his principles and maxims undermine the welfare of society, and continually militate against the present, against the eternal interest of every individual, against GOD, and his CHRIST.

## CHAP. XXVI.

*On* JOHN *the Baptist.*

WE have contemplated the grand idea which *Zacharias*, full of the holy Ghost, hath taught us to conceive of CHRIST. He is the Horn of Salvation, the principal subject of all prophecy;—the only hope of the fathers and the faithful before his incarnation;—the Deliverer of them, and all his people, out of the hands of their enemies, through the virtue of his life, death, and mediation, according to the Promise, Covenant, and Oath of JEHOVAH.

After so complete a display of the adorable plan of salvation, *Zacharias*, still under the same unerring direction, turns his eyes upon his own son, a new-born infant.—Faith, adoration of the divine goodness, and holy joy lighted up his aged venerable countenance, whilst he fixes the attention of the church upon his illustrious offspring as the immediate forerunner of the Messiah, and the first *preacher* of the glories of his name, after his manisfestation in the flesh.

"And Thou, child, shalt be called the "Prophet of the Highest;—for Thou shalt "go before the face of the LORD, to prepare "his ways:—

"To give knowledge of salvation unto his "people by the remission of their sins:—

"Through the tender mercy of our GOD, "whereby the day-spring from on high hath "visited us: to give light to them that sit "in darkness, and in the shadow of death; "to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The conclusion of this Prophecy, naturally leads us to consider the character and mission of the Baptist; the doctrine he preached, his address, and the effect of the whole upon his hearers.

The LORD testifies of Him, that "among "them that are born of women, there had "not risen a greater than *John* the Baptist." —Marvellous are the things related concerning Him. Like *Isaac*, He derived his existence from a miracle. His appearance, office, and spirit, were delineated many ages previous to his birth.—*An angel was sent down from heaven, immediately before Elizabeth conceived Him,* to notify this event was at

hand, to declare his sanctification from the womb, and the great success which should attend his ministry. No person, excepting the Savior Himself was ever so greatly distinguished. Yet the glory thrown round the Baptist, by these things, was designed to draw upon Him the eyes of all the inhabitants of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, that the record He gave of CHRIST, might spread the wider, and sink the deeper into the minds of men.

After having lived under the tuition of the best of parents; after employing himself as we must conclude, in meditation and prayer; and in the contemplation of GOD, and intimate communion with Him, being filled with the holy Ghost from his birth; after this fit preparation for his future high employment, —when He was near thirty years of age, the Word of GOD, probably an audible voice, such as *Samuel* and the prophets used to hear, came to *John*. For this He waited; not presuming to enter upon the ministry, at the impulse of his own inclination, or zeal. This was his authentic appointment, and the seal of his mission, which was to declare the promised Messiah now stood in the midst of

them,—was come immediately to erect a spiritual everlasting kingdom; and to prepare them for admission into it, was the business on which He himself was sent.

The Baptist's habit was quite rustic, resembling that of the ancient prophets, made of camels hair, bound round Him with a leathern girdle. His fare was coarse, such as the poorest of the people ate, locusts and wild honey. So seldom did he join in social meetings, so great a lover was He of retirement, and engaged with such ardor in his sacred employ, that the pleasure-loving world said, *He had a devil:* that is, was a mope, mad with religion. Yet far from assuming at all, upon the sanctity of his life, He was clothed with humility, comparing Himself to a voice, which, after it conveys the speaker's mind, has no being. *Herod*, though a prince; a prince enslaved to lewdness; a prince hardened in villainy; could not resist the impression of the Baptist's life.—He was forced for a time to fear *John*, whom all men knew to be a prophet, and himself to be a holy man, and a just. Even the Searcher of hearts declared, that whilst his doctrine imparted divine knowledge, his life was a flame of af-

fection to GOD and men. He was a *burning and a shining light.*

Thus furnished in the richest manner, for his office, by the grace and gifts of the holy Ghost, the child of *Zacharias*, "the prophet "of the Highest, goes before the face of the "LORD, to prepare his ways."

The angel had affirmed as much. "Many "of the children of *Israel* said *Gabriel*, "shall He turn to the LORD GOD; and he "shall go before his face, in the spirit and "power of *Elias*, to turn the hearts of the "fathers to the children, and the disobedient "to the wisdom of the just; to make ready "a people prepared for the LORD." Here it is plain, that the LORD, the GOD of the children of *Israel*, and the Highest, signify the same individual person. But these names, the inspired writers never give to any but the true GOD. If then they are actually given unto CHRIST, the Scripture compels us to confess—*He* is the most high GOD, the LORD GOD of *Israel*; consequently one with the Father.—That these names are given to *Him*, is undeniable: for He, before whose face *John* was to go, the angel calls, the LORD GOD—*Zacha-*

*rias* calls the Highest, and the LORD:—but, according to *John*'s confession, and as the event proves, He did not go before the face of the Father, but of CHRIST.—"I indeed "baptize you with water unto repentance, "*but He that cometh after me*, shall baptize "you with the holy Ghost, and with fire."

Immediately *before* CHRIST, *John* was to go, to prepare his ways.

When an earthly monarch begins his march to take possession of a capital city, won by his arms, or descending to him by inheritance, his troops go before to remove every obstacle in the road. The steep hills, they level; the low places they fill up; the circling path, they make straight; the craggy places plain. All this labor is absolutely needful, when the way leads through a desert. In the prophetic style, the mind of man in its natural state, is this desert;—a dreary rocky waste, without one cultivated field, or fruitful tree to cheer the eye. In such a state, the Jews notoriously were, when the LORD GOD came to his people. Gross ignorance, pride, superstition, and infidelity, blocked up the way of the Prince of

peace into their hearts; and rooted prejudices from self-love, like mountains and rocks, forbad his access. To remove them all *John* was sent immediately before his face. And if we survey the spiritual state of the inhabitants of *Judea* and *Jerusalem* at this time, and the doctrine the Baptist preached, we shall see the very same obstructions, which prevail in all places and times against the reception of CHRIST, with the only effectual method to remove them in any degree.

When the LORD came to his temple at *Jerusalem*, the party of greatest name for religion and authority, were the Pharisees; of which there were two sorts. The first were zealous, from a principle of conscience, for all the ceremonies of the law, and traditions of the elders;—paying an external obedience to the commandments of GOD, and taking much pains to save their souls. It is evident this must have been their character, from the high respect they obtained; from the Pharisee described by our LORD in the parable; from *St. Paul*'s manner of life before his conversion; from the testi-

mony he bears to many of them, that they were like himself, having a zeal for GOD; and from our Savior's declaration, that in putting his apostles to death, they would think they *did God service.*

Yet with all this form of godliness, they were sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death, far from the way of peace. They knew neither CHRIST, nor the Father;—themselves, nor the evil of sin;—neither the perfection, use, and end of the eternal Law published from mount *Sinai:* nor the meaning of their sacrifices, nor the spirit of their own religion. They were virtuous in their own eyes, trusted in themselves as righteous, and despised others.—They imagined they had no need of any better righteousness in the sight of GOD, to obtain the remission of their sins, than what was to be found in their conformity to the letter of the commandment. And of this strictly religious character, were the fiercest opposers of the doctrines of CHRIST, his persecutors and murderers. Of this character was the apostle *Paul,* before his conversion, set on fire of hell, yet verily thinking, he "ought to do

"many things contrary to the name of "JESUS."

But though these *sincere* Pharisees were thus grossly ignorant, they were conceited of their knowledge. With infinite disdain, they asked the Teacher from heaven, "Are we "blind also?" Add to this, they were elated in common with all the Jews, on account of their descent from *Abraham*, their covenant of circumcision, and separation from the Gentiles, as the peculiar people of GOD.

What a shock to every one of their prejudices, what a bold attack upon all their favorite errors, was the preaching of the Baptist! What a preparation to make his hearers, who believed his word, see their need of the Savior, and depend upon Him wholly! For *John* preached the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; telling them, that all, without difference, must submit to this ordinance; publicly confessing themselves sinners extremely polluted, and no longer go about to justify themselves. That not a temporal conqueror, but a kingdom of divine original, and spiritual nature "the kingdom

" of GOD, was at hand;" of which the two grand blessings, were, remission of sins, and the gift of the holy Ghost. " That the Law, " their boast, was the ministration of death; " but grace and truth came by JESUS " CHRIST, the SON of GOD, who is above " all; into whose hands all things are given: " —the light of the world—the bridegroom " of the church—the Lamb of GOD, who " taketh away the sin of the world:—On " whom whosoever believeth hath everlasting " life; and he that believeth not, shall not " see life; but the wrath of GOD abideth on " him."

This clear, full, sublime testimony to CHRIST, the Baptist published, and so fulfilled the prophecy of his father *Zacharias* concerning him. " He gave knowledge of " salvation to the people of GOD;" not by works of righteousness which men can do, but by the frank forgiveness of their immense and dreadful debt, " by the remission of their sins:" a remission, proceeding from " the " *tender mercy* of our GOD;" yet not exercised towards them, but through the mediation of " the day-spring from on high,"

CHRIST JESUS; distinguished by this title, because every communication of divine knowledge comes from Him; "no man knowing "the Father, but he to whom the Son will "reveal Him:" without whose teaching, darkness rests upon the mind, as deep shades of night cover the earth, till the beams of opening day give light to its inhabitants.—And till CHRIST gives this light, men sit in darkness and the shadow of death, condemned prisoners; and by Him alone, are their feet guided into the way of peace, of reconciliation with GOD, peace of conscience, and peace with all men.

Behold the sum and substance of the Gospel, proclaimed at once by this messenger, "who goes before the face of the "LORD, to prepare his ways!" Behold an abridgment of the whole that JESUS, *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*, and every faithful successor of theirs in the ministry, have preached to this hour,—CHRIST the Light, the Atonement, and All the salvation of his people.—What a perfect contrast was this to the religion of the *best* sort of the Pharisees, though bad were the best!

With these were mixed a large number of hypocrites: Pharisees who did all to be seen of men; or still worse, covered *the most villainous practices with a cloke of sanctity*;—strict in observing the traditions and ceremonies of religion, fasting, and "for a pre-"tence making long prayers;" whilst they totally neglected justice, mercy and the love of GOD, and even devoured widows houses.

Besides these hypocrites, yet of no better character were the *Sadducees*, who believed neither the resurrection, nor the existence of angel or spirit; looking upon religion only as a fit instrument to carry on civil government.

When many of these, (excited by the religious novelty of a man so famous, in the habit and character of an ancient prophet) came to hear the Baptist, and some of them approached, desirous, as it seems, of being baptized, He immediately turns and addresses them. He joins the Pharisees and Sadducees, *in principle totally opposite*, as confederates together, and openly brands them both as "a generation of vipers," full of the deadly poison of hypocrisy, malice, and error. He expresses his wonder that any so harden-

ed as they were, should at all regard his preaching, begin to take warning, and be willing to submit to his baptism. Guarding them, therefore, against their gross hypocrisy, and false confidences, He calls upon them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance.—And "think not to say within yourselves, We have "*Abraham* to our father: for I say unto you, "that GOD is able of these stones, to raise "up children unto *Abraham*. And now also "is the ax laid to the root of the tree:— "every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth "good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the "fire:"—that is, the final destruction of all destitute of faith in CHRIST, and holiness, the fruit of faith, is at hand; and as certain, as if already executed.

Besides these Pharisees, Sadducees, and Hypocrites, there were multitudes of the poor people, and many Publicans (or Tax-gatherers) men of the most abandoned lives, who belonged to no sect. These heard the Baptist to good effect, and justified GOD, being baptized of Him; whilst the Pharisees and Lawyers (or teachers of the Law) rejected

the counsel of GOD against themselves, and were not baptized.

To this company, as appears by comparing *Mark* i. 5—8. with *Luke* xiii. 10—16. He spake thus:

I, upon your profession of repentance, baptize you with water unto repentance, as I have authority from GOD to do;—and by the same authority, I threaten impenitent sinners, with eternal vengeance; and this is all I can do." But He that cometh after me, is "mightier than I, whose shoes I am not wor-"thy to bear, He shall baptize you with the "holy Ghost," (which shall be given to all them that believe on his name) "and with "fire*; Whose fan is in his hand, and He "will gather the wheat," his faithful people, "into his garner;—but the chaff," all empty professors of his religion, "He will burn with "fire unquenchable." And when these his hearers, who *had* repented, and were bap-

* That is, fiery trials. See *Luke* xii. 49, 50.—*Mark* x. 38, 39. And after the word *fire*, the *fan* is added, or the *sifting*, which the faithful preaching of the Gospel produces, as an explication of the word *fire*.

tized confessing their sins, and looking for Him that was to come, doubted whether they might continue in their respective callings, be soldiers and publicans still; and asked him, therefore, with great concern, What *they* should do? He taught them, that they might serve GOD in any station acceptably, by renouncing all those sins, to which from their way of life they were exposed, and by dwelling in love with all their fellow-creatures.

Such *doctrine* the Baptist preached. His *manner* of teaching was with power, not like a lecturer on morals, defining duty, and then leaving the important matter there.—No, He enforced all He taught by the authority of the LORD GOD; by an alarming address to every man's conscience, in his sight; dividing and distinguishing his hearers, according to their peculiar character, and state of soul; giving to each his proper instruction, and fixing the attention of all upon the separating fan, the axe of almighty vengeance, the unquenchable fire.

His *manner* of delivery, perfectly agreed with the solemnity of his subject, and added great force to it. It was zealous, vehement,

loud, and bold; formed to possess in a moment every hearer with conviction, that He felt the truth of all He taught; had nothing at heart, but to see it succeed in the conversion of sinners to GOD; fearing no consequences which might follow respecting Himself, from delivering it without concealment or palliation.

The effect of the whole upon the vast concourse of his hearers was admirable. Many of the most notorious offenders, harlots and publicans, our LORD tells us, heard his word, believed, and repented. Many dejected mourners for sin, were comforted; the poor amongst the people were rejoiced. Some of the haughty Pharisees, Hypocrites, and Sadducees were divinely changed. Their mistakes appeared fatal, their danger imminent, the glory of CHRIST conspicuous and captivating.

Such success, we are certain, must attend the Baptist's labors, because the angel declared, that "He should turn *many* of the "children of *Israel* to the LORD their GOD, "and the hearts of the fathers to the chil- "dren;" putting an end, wherever his word

took place, to those bitter quarrels, which are so frequently found between nearest relations.

Such glorious success must accompany the Baptist's preaching to vast multitudes, since *Zacharias*, full of the holy Ghost, declared, that "He should give knowledge of salvation to the people of GOD by the remission of their sins; light to them that sat in darkness, and the shadow of death."

This success puts an honor upon the first publication of the Gospel, and was a specimen of its divine efficacy, which to the end of time, is GOD's appointed means of bringing salvation to the lost.

Indefatigable in these labors of love, the Baptist remained, till the lewd *Herodias* instigated *Herod* to cast Him into prison. And perceiving the uneasy impressions, *John's* faithful condemnation of their abominable commerce left upon *Herod's* mind, her cruel jealousy never slept, till *John* was beheaded. Thus, like the prophets of old, "who spake in the name of the LORD," the Baptist suffered a violent death, for discharging his office, and his conscience. In the myste-

rious course of providence, a bloody tyrant is suffered, *at the instigation of an adulteress*, to put an end to the inestimable labors of one of the most excellent witnesses for GOD, in the very prime of his days, and height of his usefulness; leaving upon record this fact, that the greatest honor, which can be conferred on those in whom the LORD most delights, is, power to stand forth *before his enemies with such boldness*, as to incur their resentment and persecution, even unto death.

## CHAP. XXVII.

### *On the Divinity of* CHRIST.

THE doctrine of this Prophecy proves their fatal error, who degrade CHRIST into a man like ourselves, or esteem Him less than very GOD: for *Gabriel* calls Him the LORD GOD of *Israel;* and *Zacharias*, the LORD, the Highest. His history, from his conception, to the full establishment of his church, affords abundant evidence that He is so.

Waving, therefore, many sufficient proofs, more commonly urged as a scriptural foundation for this great article of our faith, I shall confine myself to *his history;* from thence proving, that all the circumstances respecting his birth, life, and death, are perfectly consistent, if CHRIST be very GOD; all strange and preposterous to the last degree, supposing Him to be in his nature infinitely inferior.

After having been for near four thousand years the principal subject of all prophecy, in the fulness of time, CHRIST is conceived of the blessed Virgin, by the overshadowing power of the holy Ghost. Soon after, *Mary* goes to salute her cousin *Elizabeth. And it came to pass, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the holy Ghost, and said, Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* The solemnity of the occasion, and the person dictating this question to *Elizabeth*, makes it the more memorable and weighty. If by the expression, *my* LORD, *Elizabeth* meant only a man like ourselves,

how was it any condescension, that her near relation, the mother of one mere man, should come to salute the mother of another mere man? But if *Mary* was really the mother of *Elizabeth*'s LORD and *Maker*, according to the flesh, there was then cause sufficient for all her admiration.

The circumstances of the birth of CHRIST, strongly prove this was the truth. For it is honored and distinguished by prodigies of the noblest kind, to which nothing was ever seen in the least degree similar. A new luminary, called *his* Star, shines in the firmament, appointed to be the miraculous conductor of the *Eastern* sages, to the place where the Child lay, that they might come and *worship* Him. Who is no sooner born, than the angel appears to the shepherds, near *Bethlehem*, saying unto them, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great "joy, which shall be to you, and to *all* peo- "ple: for unto you is born this day, in the "city of *David*, a Savior, which is CHRIST, "the LORD." Instantly at the mention of this divine title, there was with Him, "a "multitude of the heavenly host, praising

" GOD," and expressing in their hymn, the grand effects of the Incarnation: " Glory " to GOD in the Highest, and on earth " peace; good-will towards men."

We read of no mark of distinction of this kind ever attending the birth of a mere mortal. Not *Abraham*'s, though the Father of the faithful;—not the birth of *Moses*, though he was the mouth of GOD to *Israel*, and their Deliverer out of *Egypt*;—not of *Paul*, though an inestimable benefactor to the Gentile world. Each of these stand amongst the first of mere men, yet was their birth unnoticed by any, save the little circle of eye-witnesses to the event. But " when He bringeth his only begotten Son " into the world, He saith, Let all the angels " of GOD *worship* Him."

Here again every thing is preposterous, if He whom all the angels were to worship, was more inferior to them in nature, than the most stupid peasant is to *Solomon* in wisdom. And with what truth could *Gabriel* call the infant JESUS, the LORD; or how could He be the object of divine adora-

tion, at his birth, being no more than a man like ourselves?

Further, The history of CHRIST, proves He did the works, which are ascribed to GOD alone; which none of his messengers, though empowered to work miracles without number, ever did; that He spoke of Himself in terms, which it were blasphemy for any but GOD to use;—that the rays of divinity shone forth in his Death; and that He did receive on earth, and still receives in heaven, the worship due to GOD only. Can He then be less than the true GOD?

For instance: Power over the winds and seas, was never exercised by any *mere* man. This is alledged in the Old Testament as a decisive proof, that the GOD of the Jews was the Almighty.—*Psalm* lxxxix. 8, 9.—"O LORD GOD of Hosts, who is a strong "LORD, like unto Thee? or to thy faithful-"ness round about Thee? Thou rulest the "raging of the sea; when the waves thereof "arise, Thou stillest them." *Psalm* cvii. 25, 26. "For He commandeth, and raiseth "the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves "thereof:—They mount up to the heaven,

" they go down again to the depths; their " soul is melted because of trouble:—They " reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken " man, and are at their wits end. Then " they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, " and He bringeth them out of their dis- " tresses. He maketh the storm a calm, " so that the waves thereof are still:—Then " are they glad, because they be quiet. So " He bringeth them unto their desired ha- " ven."

A more majestic description of almighty power, cannot be found. Yet this very scripture, without altering a syllable, relates a fact, which passed between JESUS, and his disciples. A violent storm arises, the waves of the sea are lifted up: His disciples are ready to perish, for the ship was beginning to sink. They call not upon the Father, but upon CHRIST; not to pray for their deliverance, but to save them Himself. He hears their cry. He rebuked the wind, He said unto the sea, " Peace, be still;—and " the wind ceased, and there was a great " calm." Now if uncontrolable dominion over the winds and waves, be in the Old

Testament a demonstration, that the GOD of the Jews was the Almighty; the same uncontrolable dominion, exercised by CHRIST in the most god-like manner, when invoked as alone able to save, must prove with equal force, that *He* is the Almighty also, *one* with the Father.

Again; We find that spreading out the heavens alone, and treading upon the waves of the sea, are joined together as equal acts of almighty power, peculiar to GOD.—Now turn to *Mark* vi. 49. There you read, that when the disciples were "toiling in rowing "(for the wind was contrary to them) about "the fourth watch of the night, JESUS "cometh unto them, walking on the sea, and "would have passed by them. But when "they saw Him walking upon the sea, they "supposed it had been a spirit, and cried "out (for they all saw Him,) and were "troubled.—And immediately He talked "with them," by which they must knew *who* it was.—After this He saith unto them, "Be of good cheer, Εγω ειμι, *I am He*, be "not afraid." Here in the very exercise of an act, declared in scripture to appertain

to GOD alone, He calls Himself JEHOVAH; —for *I am He*, means no less, as shall presently be proved.

Should it be said, no works wrought by CHRIST, can ever oblige us to conclude He was the true GOD, because He says, "I can "do nothing of myself;" and prays to the Father, when He raised up *Lazarus* from the grave.

I answer; it would have been impossible, without these declarations, for us to have believed there is any distinction of persons in the divine nature, as we are taught to do; or the subjection of CHRIST in his offices of Servant and Mediator, to which he humbled himself, as the prophets foretold. Being, therefore, very GOD, and very Man, in one CHRIST, He could not, consistently with his own character, but speak at different times in a style proper to both. The church of CHRIST, therefore, can perfectly reconcile this apparent contradiction, and all passages in holy writ, which express his inferiority to the Father, and entire dependence upon Him: for this belongs to his character as very Man and Mediator.—But upon supposition,

that CHRIST is less than very GOD, no vindication can be admitted for his ever using the style of GOD, when He speaks of Himself. Wisdom, goodness, modesty, and truth, all require, that creatures should, with a sacred dread, abstain from every thing tending to confound themselves with their Creator. But JESUS does the very reverse. Hear Him vindicate Himself, when accused of polluting the Sabbath: "Hitherto the Father worketh, and I work." See the sign He gives, upon the Jews requiring one of Him, as his authority for driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple.—"Destroy this temple, (pointing to his own "body) and in three days, *I* will raise it up." Hear Him foretelling the victory of his cross: "And I, if I be lifted up, will "draw all men unto me," *John* xii. 32.

But above all observe, CHRIST frequently calls Himself JEHOVAH, or *I am He*. That this expression signifies JEHOVAH, cannot be doubted:—for it means *self-existence*; and is very often used, to denote the supreme majesty of heaven and earth. Thus *Deut.* xxxii. 39. "See now that I, even *I am He*, "and there is no GOD with me."—*Psalm*

cii. 27. "Thou art the same," in *Hebrew*, *Thou art He.*—And this title is here given, immediately after the creation of heaven and earth has been ascribed to GOD. In *Isa.* xli. 4. "I the LORD, with the first, and "with the last, *I am He.*" Many other passages might be cited. But these sufficiently prove, that the Jews were taught from holy writ to understand, that this grand appellation, *I am He*, expressing necessary existence, belonged only to the Creator of all things. But this very appellation, CHRIST Himself assumes, as his own proper name. Discovering to the apostles, the almost incredible treachery of *Judas*, in betraying Him, "These things I tell you," says He, "before it come to pass, that when it "is come to pass, ye may believe:" that is, from this instance of my omniscience, "that *I am He.*" When the Jews were enraged at his asserting his own existence before *Abraham*, He enflames their rising indignation against Himself to the utmost height, by affirming, with a kind of oath, his supreme Divinity.—"Verily, ve-"rily, I say unto you, before *Abraham* was, "I am," or, *I am He.* A truth of such ab-

solute necessity to be received, that He tells his adversaries, *ver.* 24. "If ye believe "not that *I am He*, ye shall die in your sins."

How then could the Jews do less than they did, regarding JESUS only as a man? They heard him repeatedly affirm, "I am "the LORD GOD. I solemnly assure you, *I* "*am He*. I again tell you, that if you do not "believe that *I am He*, ye shall die in your "sins." GOD had given them a law against blasphemers and false prophets, commanding that they should be put to death by stoning. Supposing, therefore, JESUS was a mere man, *it was their bounden duty to stone Him to death for these sayings*, as we know they often attempted to do. And it is the bounden duty of those, who arrogate to themselves the title of rational Christians, chiefly for agreeing with Jews in denying the proper Divinity of CHRIST, and, with Jews, brand his church as idolaters for worshipping Him; it is their bounden duty, I say, if they believe GOD abhors idolatry, with them to call JESUS accursed; when they read in his authentic history, that He takes to Himself the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH,—*I am He.*

This supposed blasphemy, was the cause of his death. For "when the high priest "asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou "the CHRIST, the Son of the Blessed? JE-"SUS said, I am; or I am He:—and ye shall "see the Son of Man sitting on the right "hand of power, and coming in the clouds "of heaven. Then the high priest rent his "clothes, and saith, Ye have heard the blas-"phemy, what think ye? And they all con-"demned Him to be guilty of death," *Mark* xiv. 63.

And now see how they gather round his cross, casting barbarous insults on Him in his agonies, and triumphing over Him in his fall. Behold his face, more marred than any man's, and his body ploughed up with long furrows, by the scourging He endured! Hear that loud and bitter cry, as of one sinking under inexpressible horrors of mind, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou for-"saken me!"—Still the union of the divine and human nature never appeared more incontestable, than in the midst of all this shocking scene:—for a ruffian, upon *his own*

*confession* deserving the death he suffered, calls upon JESUS to remember him. He instantly receives from Him, an assurance of immediate everlasting happiness. Who can deliver after this manner, but GOD alone? Take off the veil, which hides from the eye of sense and unenlightened reason the transaction which passed on the cross, and you will perceive, that JESUS appeared in no instance of his life so glorious, as when He hung a spectacle to men and angels on the accursed tree. Then "his death destroyed "death, and him that had the power of it. "As *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the wil- "derness, so was the Son of Man lifted "up," bound only by the cords of love, for the healing of the nations. His precious blood, which bathed his body, flowed "a "fountain for all sin, and for all unclean- "ness;" of which the growing virtue, and the growing praise, shall fill with wonder and joy all heaven for ever.

Can such beneficent effects be ascribed to the blood of a mere man? or can the death of one innocent creature be the atonement

for the sins of innumerable myriads, and the everlasting salvation of all who escape the wrath to come? Here the things constantly asserted in holy writ of the efficacy of CHRIST's death, are beyond all proportion, without supposing the blood of CHRIST, which purchased the church, was indeed the blood of GOD.

Nor during his unexampled humiliation, were proofs of his eternal Godhead wanting. Above, below, on every side, whilst He hangs on the cross, the whole frame of nature was violently disturbed. Darkness at noon-day covers all the earth, for three hours. The sun itself is darkened, not by an interposing planet, but by a miracle. The earth quakes, and with the veil of the temple, the rocks are rent. What manner of proportion is there between such awful and grand prodigies as these, and the death of a mere innocent man? Did ever martyred prophet or apostle, receive any degree of such honor, in their dying hours? What aileth thee, O thou earth, that thou wert moved, and thou sun, that thou refusedst to shine? We can answer, Tremble not at the presence only,

but at the crucifixion of your Maker. In this loud and terrifying manner, publish the detestation due to the attrocious deed:—and when the GOD of nature suffers, let the whole inanimate creation express its sympathy with Him.

Having been crucified by the Scribes and Pharisees, for asserting his equality with the Father; after his resurrection, instead of refusing, as sacrilege, He openly receives the adoration due to GOD only. *Thomas*, upon hearing JESUS declare to Him all his thoughts, and stubborn unbelief of heart, concerning his resurrection, *said unto Him, My Lord, and my God!*—At his ascension, all his disciples worship Him. Soon after *Stephen* is stoned, invoking, and saying, "LORD JE-"SUS, receive my spirit.—And he kneeled "down and cried with a loud voice, LORD, "lay not this sin to their charge." Here a martyr "beholding the heavens opened, "and JESUS at the right hand of GOD," prays to Him alone for the two greatest gifts which can be received, the salvation of his own soul, and the pardon of the worst murderers under heaven. Yet this very martyr,

if CHRIST be not by nature GOD, with the Father, dies in the very act of idolatry; therefore, according to express scripture, "can never enter into the kingdom of hea- "ven." This is but one amongst a thousand glaring absurdities, which inevitably follow from degrading the Savior into a mere man, or a creature.

From this time, and no wonder, we find the churches of CHRIST constantly distinguished by the very practice of the first martyr, by their *calling* on the name of the LORD JESUS. And calling upon GOD, we know, is the Old Testament phrase for worshipping Him. When more than sixty years had passed from his ascension, St. *John* is favored with a visit from his best and dearest friend. So glorious was the sight, that he fell at his feet as dead. "And He laid his right hand "upon me, saying unto me," (observe He takes to Himself the style of the Supreme) "I am the first, and the last, *I am He that* "*liveth*, and was dead; and behold, I am "alive for evermore, Amen; and have the "keys of hell and of death," *Rev.* i. 17. And to finish the whole account, the throne

of GOD and the Lamb are joined together, as receiving the everlasting adoration of all the company of heaven.—Thus the Oracles of GOD deliver down the character of CHRIST to all ages.

But how contrary to every idea of wisdom, goodness, and propriety, is this history of CHRIST, if He be no more than a man, or a creature! Why then at his birth is He called the LORD? Why does He do the works of GOD in the manner of God? Why speak the language which appertains to GOD only? Why in his death receive attestation to his innocence from the whole inanimate creation? Why after his resurrection receive worship as GOD from *Thomas*, from all his disciples, from all the churches, from saints and angels in heaven?

So interwoven is this grand article of the Christian creed in the whole scheme of scriptural religion, that you demolish it all, as soon as you degrade CHRIST into a mere man, or a creature. For immediately our natural condition and character, sinful and corrupt in that degree the scriptures describe it, must be denied; our obligations to love,

obey, and trust GOD, must be diminished exceedingly; our estimate of the nature and demerit of sin, of the divine displeasure against it; of the perfections of GOD, and the way in which eternal life is to be attained, must be totally different from what the church of CHRIST hath ever believed. Immediately we must see great reason to be offended at many things which CHRIST spoke, and many strong passages in scripture, which nothing but the utmost violence of interpretation can pervert from testifying to his supreme Divinity. And if we are true to our principles, and men of thought, we shall very soon be involved in the utmost perplexity, to account for this greatest of all mysteries,—how the Christian church, with the apostles at the head of it, were all suffered to fall into idolatry;—to continue in the abominable worship of a mere man or creature, with the worship due to the supreme GOD.—This is a strong objection against the Revealer Himself:—and will lead to a contempt of Christianity. For what great good has it done?—Jews and Turks, not Christians, are the true worship-

pers, according to their scheme, who deny the Son. And the crime of the Jews in calling CHRIST, if but a mere man, though a true prophet, *accursed*; or of the Turks, in setting aside his Gospel, because they think it exceedingly corrupted, it as nothing, compared to the *universal idolatry* of the *Christian* Church in adoring CHRIST, as "GOD, over all, blessed for ever." For those who thus worship Him, must be, in their eyes who deny Him to be very GOD, *Idolaters*. And they in ours, enemies to the cross of CHRIST, blasphemers of his adorable name, and subverters of his holy religion.

So far, therefore, is it from being, as many most falsly assert, a point of speculation in divinity, what we believe concerning the character and nature of CHRIST, that not one article in the whole compass of religion is of equal importance. And if there be any one point of faith more characteristic of the Christian church than another, it is THIS, that "JESUS CHRIST is the true GOD, and "eternal life."

## CHAP. XXVIII.

*On Contempt of Preaching.*

THE great utility of the Baptist's ministry, predicted in this Prophecy, proves their mistake, who undervalue the preaching of the Gospel. For allowing both the mission and endowments of the Baptist and the Apostles were in several respects extraordinary, still *all* ministers whom CHRIST sends, are, as they were, appointed to "give light to them "that sit in darkness, and to turn the hearts "of the disobedient to the wisdom of the "just." They are also furnished with qualifications for this office, and have assurance of *success*, in some measure, as the Baptist and Apostles had in a superabundant degree.

The proof of these assertions should animate every faithful pastor with confident expectation of saving the souls of men; and convince those who disparage this mode of spreading divine knowledge, that they greatly err, and offend GOD.

All preachers, sent by CHRIST, it was said, are appointed to the same kind of work, as the Baptist and Apostles were. Read the institution of the ministerial office. You must confess it to be one and the same in every age: for "when the LORD ascended "up on high, after leading our captivity "captive," He, to perpetuate the benefits of his glorious triumph, "gave some apostles, "some prophets, some evangelists, some "pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of "the saints, for the work of the ministry, "for the edifying the body of CHRIST, till we "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the "knowledge of the Son of GOD, unto a per-"fect man; unto the measure of the stature "of the fulness of CHRIST," *Ephes.* iv.

To secure these grand purposes, the Christian ministry was at first instituted; and, as the terms necessarily import, must be exercised, so long as CHRIST has a church upon earth. But in this institution, the extraordinary officers of the church, are appointed to the very same spiritual employment. Neither the splendid gifts peculiar to the apostles, prophets, and evangelists;

nor their unequalled extent of usefulness, prevent a perfect equality in this respect. They are *all* set apart to preach CHRIST, and call sinners to repentance; that "they "may receive remission of their sins, and an "inheritance amongst them that are sancti- "fied, through faith which is in Him:" for "this is the work of the ministry. They are *all* set apart "for the perfecting of the "saints," by cementing them together in the unity of the faith,—"and for the edifying "the body of CHRIST;" that is, promoting their obedience, and increasing their comfort by more full discoveries of the counsel of GOD, till they enter into glory.

But on the supposition, that pastors and teachers whom CHRIST sends, can ever cease to be useful in this most beneficent manner, then his gift to the church must become of no value. Then either the conversion of sinners, and advancement of the faithful in spiritual life, must entirely cease, or be produced and maintained by other means than the Savior ordained for this purpose; which would at once impeach his veracity, and cast contempt on his own ap-

pointment: a case which cannot be supposed. Consequently the being, and well-being of the church, in all ages, must depend upon the instrumentality of those officers, whom the LORD entrusts with the treasure of his Gospel, and makes rulers over his houshold, "to give them meat in due season."

The origin, therefore, of the Christian preacher's office is divine, and its design most beneficent to men. Proper qualifications also, are always found in those whom CHRIST puts into this office. The inspired epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, specify that knowledge and love of the truth; that facility to explain and prove it to others; that exemplary behavior, and sanctity of character, which are indispensably required in this holy profession. These qualifications are divine credentials, which *visibly* distinguish the men whom the LORD has been pleased to call, choose, and appoint to this office. Without these qualifications, preachers thrust themselves by human ordination into the ministry to get bread, or from vile ambition to gain preferment and power in the church.

From the possession of these qualifica-

tions, common to all teachers whom CHRIST sends, they must harmonize with the apostles in the unity of the faith. There can be no disagreement amongst them in essentials; because they are *all* taught of GOD, out of the same scripture, to lay the same foundation, to build the same superstructure, to give the same account of the fall, the redemption, the world, and the church.

Thus qualified, teachers whom CHRIST sends must have seals to their ministry, and turn some to righteousness: because the LORD, in honor of his truth, for encouragement of his servants, and in love to his people, has decreed this shall be the certain consequence of preaching his word. In one passage, He compares its operation to the influence of snow and rain, "which come "down from heaven, and return not thither, "but give seed to the sower, and bread to "the eater;"—declaring, "his word shall "not return unto him void, but shall ac- "complish that which He please, and pros- "per in the thing whereto He sent it." But He sends it for the justification, conversion, and everlasting salvation of men: which He expresses under the following beautiful ima-

gery. "For ye" (by whom this word is received) "shall go out" of your natural state of guilt, condemnation, and slavery to sin) "with joy, and be led forth" (in the good ways of the LORD) "with peace.—Instead of the "thorn," (fit emblem of sinners, altogether unprofitable) "shall come up the ufeful, "stately fir-tree," well representing the excellent of the earth.—"Instead of the "brier", (despicable men, vexing all about them, whose end is to burnt) "shall come "up the" beautiful, sweet-scented "myrtle-"tree," (emblem of peaceful, amiable believers. "And it" (this divine transformation) "shall be to the LORD for a name, "and for an everlasting sign" (of the efficacy of his word preached) "which shall not be "cut off." *Isai.* lv.

In another passage, applicable to the times of the Gospel, (for *Jeremiah* says, "what is there spoken, shall be considered "in the latter days,") the Almighty accuses false teachers of running before they are sent; of prophesying, before He had spoken to them; of telling dreams and lies, and causing the people to err. After this heavy charge, He points out the method they

*should* have taken to succeed:—"But if "they had stood in my counsel, and had "caused my people to hear my words, then "they should have turned them from their "evil ways, and from their evil doings. Let "him that hath my word, speak my word "faithfully. What is the chaff to the "wheat? Is not my word like as a fire, "saith the LORD, and like a hammer that "breaketh the rock in pieces?" *Jer.* xxiii.

How can we avoid concluding from these declarations, that some degree of *success* must accompany the faithful preaching of GOD's word? Did not St. *Paul* conclude thus, when He charged *Timothy* to take heed to himself, and to his doctrine; assuring him, that by so doing, he should save himself, and those that heard him? Did he not conclude thus, when he determined to *rejoice* that CHRIST was preached, though it was from the basest motives, from envy, strife, and malevolence against himself? No other reason can be given for this determination, than the certainty there is of success in some degree, from preaching that name, "which "is above every name."

Should it be said, that CHRIST Himself "stretched forth his hands all the day long "to a disobedient and gainsaying people;" —that the apostle cried out, "Who hath "believed our report? and to whom hath "the arm of the LORD been revealed?" I grant they did. Yet how many *thousands* were saved by their labors? How many churches were planted? The case is still the same. Much good upon the whole is done by pastors and teachers whom CHRIST sends, notwithstanding the vast majority excuse themselves from receiving their doctrine, and either hate or despise it. Still, in the language of the parable which describes this matter, "the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, the outcasts in the highways and hedges;" that is, many of the helpless, the afflicted, and the most guilty, will be brought in to feast at the supper. Faithful, scriptural representations of our natural state; of the qualities and desert of sin; of the person, sufferings, love and triumph of CHRIST in the redemption of his church; of the grace, mercy and peace enjoyed through believing in his name, never fail of pro-

ducing, in some measure, an effect worthy of GOD, and becoming the publication of his own word; which He calls "the good "seed bringing forth good fruit; in some an "hundred fold, in some sixty, in some thirty; "the truth that sanctifies, and makes the "soul free indeed."

Every faithful preacher, therefore, of this word, should be importunate with his LORD, to grant him to see it made the instrument more and more of turning men from the error of their way:—should boldly plead the divine institution of his office, its beneficent design, his call to it, and the promise of success, till the most Mighty "girds his sword upon his thigh, and rides on conquering in favor of the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness." What are insatiable love of sin, sottish ignorance, pride, and unbelief, with all their visible and invisible abettors, before this rod of his power? The word of the truth of the Gospel, we read of old, brought forth fruit in all the world. Has it lost its divine efficacy in a course of years? No more than the sun its light or heat: "For his name shall endure for ever; his

"name shall be continued as long as the "sun; and men shall be blessed in Him," who is the great subject of the Gospel.

How groundless then is the common plea used to disparage the utility of preaching CHRIST:—"We know already as much as we can be told. Church prayers and reading the scriptures are sufficient. It signifies very little what is preached. We do our duty, when we worship GOD. The vulgar only need to be taught."

Most absurd and false! For the prayers of the Church are seldom used aright, or the scripture understood, till faithful preaching has enlightened the mind. And the reason is plain:—We are naturally averse to come any further under the power of religion, than is consistent with great indulgence to pride and self-will. Hence we exalt customary forms of devotion in secret, regular attendance upon public worship, external and partial obedience, as sufficient, and grow secure in the practice of these things. A zealous attack, therefore, upon this favorite error, from the ministers of CHRIST, is the way GOD generally is pleased to use for its

detection and overthrow. Thus in the Jewish church, they had the Oracles, the Covenants, and the Service of GOD. Of these they made their boast, and from day to day attended upon the worship of GOD. But it was in hypocrisy, ignorance, and great wickedness, that they worshipped Him, not "in "spirit and in truth." With all the advantages for the knowledge of GOD in their hands, and in the constant use of the means of grace, they were still "sitting in darkness "and the shadow of death." And those who received the light of life, did not receive it principally from reading the Scriptures, to which they had been accustomed from their childhood, nor to the temple-service, which they had always attended; but to the Baptist's ministry. His alarming denunciations of the wrath to come, against all who trusted in themselves as righteous; his full and glorious testimony to the Lamb of GOD; dispelled the mists and darkness, which till then had covered their minds: though he spoke only what *Moses*, the *Psalms*, and the Prophets contained.

The very same instrument, namely, faithful preaching of his word, GOD is pleased, as appears from history, and matter of fact passing before our eyes, to make use of in every age, when "He gives knowledge of "salvation to his people." Faithful preaching manifests the difference between nominal and real Christians!—between barren assent to scripture-doctrines, and the faith of GOD's Elect;—between external obedience, and spiritual life;—between honoring CHRIST with all his titles, from mere influence of education, and cleaving to Him from real want and knowledge of his excellency.

Despise not then prophesying. It is eminently the channel by which GOD has chosen to convey his Grace to the children of men. Do not fancy liberal education, learning, honesty, or the practice of devotion, set you above reaping much advantage for your soul, from pastors, whom CHRIST has really called, qualified, and sent into his vineyard. Consider that from the beginning, it was his manner to send his disciples before him, whithersoever he Himself would come; and

his command to all, who long for the salvation of men, is, "to pray the LORD of the "harvest, to send forth laborers into the "harvest." Remember the *Ethiopian* eunuch, with all his piety, understood not the scripture he was so devoutly reading, nor the way of life, till *Philip* was sent to preach CHRIST unto him: nor *Cornelius*, till *Peter* told him "words, whereby he might be "saved." How could the excellent advantages which faithful preaching produces be rendered more conspicuous, or greater honor be put upon the office?

## CHAP. XXIX.

*On the Connection between Christian Doctrine and Good Works.*

THE Prophecy of *Zacharias*, by being full of the peculiar principles of Christianity, proves it is a great mistake to press the practice of good works *in neglect* of Christian doc-

trine. Yet how many zealously contend, that men should *only* be taught to be sober, peaceable, and kind in their families; to "do "justice, love mercy," and attend upon the worship of GOD, believing the Christian religion is from heaven. But the scripture-doctrine of innate depravity infecting every man, and of the Law concluding all under sin, which are the ground-work of Redemption; the glory of the Redeemer's person, work, and salvation; Justification by faith in his name; the new Covenant and Oath of GOD; the witness and influence of the holy Ghost; and "the knowledge of salvation by "the remission of sins"—These things, they suppose, are far above common comprehension; for which reason they ought not to be the topics of instruction from the pulpit. The best service you can do to men is to dwell only on *plain and practical subjects*.

This mistake has been long asserted with the greatest confidence, and much too easily credited. It is necessary, therefore, to expose its falshood, and many bad effects.

If Christian doctrines then are to be passed

over in silence, as above the level of common understandings, the most important part of the Bible must be of very little use. The most important part, is that doubtless, which hath something in the manner of its delivery peculiarly solemn; and all who hear, are called upon to regard with particular attention; which CHRIST and his apostles repeat from the prophets, containing what can be known *only* by express revelation from GOD. Honored with this high distinction are the Christian doctrines. For instance, that "the "seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's "head;" that the child born to us, is the "mighty GOD; the deliverer of his peo- "ple; the propitiation for sin; the alone "mediator between GOD and man; a great "and merciful high priest, the universal "judge," in and through whom, all who unfeignedly trust in Him shall be saved, and all who despise Him shall perish. These great things, have the highest mark of distinction put upon them, to make them project to our notice above the rest of scripture; for they are proclaimed with the utmost solemnity, and awfully introduced, or con-

cluded, with "Thus saith the LORD of "Hosts: The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will "perform this." They are repeated from the prophets, by CHRIST and his apostles, and the greatest stress is laid upon receiving them. But if no formal proof, explanation, or recommendation of these great truths are to be offered; if the practice of universal righteousness *only* must be urged, all-important as they are, they will very soon be despised, or at least forgotten. For to what use will any man suppose they can serve, if their certainty, importance, or practical influence are never pressed upon the conscience by them, whose office it is to do it? These doctrines have no place naturally in our minds, nor are they deducible from our own reasonings, since they spring only from the counsel of GOD. By the constant omission of them, therefore, on the one hand, and constant urging the practice of good works *only* on the other, who can avoid concluding, that good works may be well produced, independent of Christian doctrine, and are sufficient to salvation;—that the moral part of Christianity is only worthy of esteem, and all

in the New Testament, as well as the Old, respecting CHRIST Himself, (his example excepted) may be passed over in silence, without offence to GOD, or detriment to man? Thus the most important part of holy writ is made to appear insignificant.

This guilty neglect of Christian doctrine, so dishonourable to the Bible, directly contradicts the judgment of CHRIST and his apostles. Had all the Savior's sermons been like that on the mount, it might have been pretended with some plausibility, that the whole design of the Gospel Revelation was to make men *good*, without regard to faith in any particular doctrines. But how very different from any thing contained in that divine discourse, are many of his dictates? Does He not plainly teach the universal ruin of mankind in the fall, when He says, "The Son "of man is come to seek and to save that "which was lost, and to give his life a ran-"som for many?" Does he not mark our innate depravity, in the strongest lines, by specifying the manifold iniquities which proceed out of the heart, as streams from their fountain-head, and defile the man? Does He

not twice, with a kind of oath, assert the absolute necessity of our being born again of the Spirit, because in our first and natural state we are all born after the flesh? Does He not with the most solemn asseveration declare, there is no life or salvation, without eating his flesh, or drinking his blood? comparing Himself no less than *six times* in one chapter to the manna, which was the whole sustenance of *Israel* in the wilderness," *John* vi.

Besides, how very little in the Gospel of St. *John* is delivered on plain practical subjects, compared with what is there taught concerning CHRIST, his work, and salvation.—Great part of that brief history, is taken up in displaying his glory, as "the Lamb of "GOD that taketh away the sin of the "world;—the bread of GOD that came "down from heaven;—the light of the "world;—the way, the truth, and the life; "—the word that was in the beginning with "GOD, and was GOD;—the good shepherd, "that giveth his life for the sheep," and preserves them from perishing, in spite of all their foes.

Now as no glimpse of these sublime truths

is seen in those parts of scripture, which are only designed to inculcate *moral practice*, when we meet with assertions of them, they must be intended to teach us something *very different from it*, even the peculiar doctrines of the Christian faith.

If the Savior then before his crucifixion, when it was improper, for several reasons, to speak too explicitly about the nature and efficacy of his own death, resurrection, and ascension, did yet by no means omit teaching, much more than moral righteousness, no one can neglect these his sayings, without reproaching Him as a solemn trifler, for revealing things unnecessary to be known, and condemning that method of religious instruction, which He, in infinite wisdom, adopted.

When the kingdom of CHRIST was set up after his ascension, the apostles insist also *much more* on the doctrines of faith, than on the practice of good works. They perpetually teach, that "JESUS was exalted to "be a Prince, and a Savior, to give repen- "tance and remission of sins;—that there is "salvation in no other;—that through this "man is preached the forgiveness of sins,

" and by Him all that believe are justified " from all things, from which " they could " not be justified by the law of *Mo-* " *ses.*" What are the *Acts of the holy Apostles*, more than an account of their travels from one city and country to another, to preach the kingdom of GOD, and the things which concern the Lord JESUS CHRIST, with the effects their testimony produced; subjects certainly very different from justice, mercy, or the love of GOD, though the appointed means of leading men into the practice of those graces. The *inspired Epistles* addressed to men who already believed the articles of the Christian faith, are almost every one of them written on the same plan. They open with a grand, affecting account of the essential doctrines and blessings of the Gospel; from whence, towards the conclusion, devotedness of heart to GOD, purity of manners, and the most exemplary obedience are pressed, not only as becoming their Christian profession, but as fruits necessary to prove a real union with CHRIST. The long epistle to the *Romans*, and that to the *Hebrews*, is a system of divinity relating to

CHRIST and his church, with an application of the whole to practice. Every one by opening his Bible may see these things for himself.

I observe further, that these doctrines are not only often taught by CHRIST, but at full length explained and established by his apostles, and their excellent influence is expressly affirmed. Were they above common comprehension, or of a *speculative* nature, could the glory of delivering men from condemnation, and from slavery to sin, be ascribed to them? Yet to them this glory is ascribed, when our LORD affirms, "The truth shall make you "free;" and when He prays for his disciples, "Father, sanctify them by thy truth; thy "word is truth." Would He Himself say, "to the *poor* the Gospel is *preached*;" or St. *James*, that "GOD hath chosen the *poor*, "*rich in faith*;" or St. *Paul*, that "the things "which are despised, and are not," (meaning the slaves who were bought and sold like cattle) "hath GOD chosen, that CHRIST "might be made of Him wisdom, righteous-"ness, sanctification, and redemption" to them? Would these things be asserted, if

the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel were above common comprehension? They must then work like a charm, and the lowest of the people become rich towards GOD, and wise, and holy, and be received into glory, without understanding the things preached to them, as the means of their salvation.

To positive assertions of the usefulness of these doctrines, an express command is added, to *teach them constantly*; which alone is sufficient to decide the point, and ought to be well considered by them, whose false, rash zeal for good works, hurries them into a criminal neglect of Christian principles. St. *Paul* charges *Titus* to declare with all authority, that it is "the *Grace of* GOD which "bringeth *salvation*, (not the law of works, "which saith, He that doeth these things, "shall live by them) hath appeared unto all "men, teaching them to deny ungodliness "and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, right-"eously, and godly in this present world." He again charges *Titus*, to affirm *constantly* the total corruption of human nature; free justification through the kindness and love of GOD our Savior; regeneration, and renewing

of the holy Ghost; *in order that* "they who "have believed in GOD might be careful to "maintain good works," calling these doctrines, "good and profitable unto men*."

* The mere sound of scripture words, has been much abused to oppose their real meaning. This has happened remarkably in the text before us. Many urge it, with the utmost confidence, as a command to dwell on the practice of good works, when, in fact, the text is a charge to all Christian ministers, to insist on man's wretched state before faith in CHRIST, and the rich mercy of GOD through Him, for justication, regeneration, and eternal life. The inspired Apostle first affirms the truth and certainty of these things, by calling the whole of this doctrine, *a faithful word.* He then asserts their excellent influence, as *the reason why* they must be taught *constantly*: "That they who have be- "lieved in GOD, might be careful to maintain good "works." Here the conjunction ἵνα, plainly proves, that good works are *produced* by the constant teaching of these doctrines, *not* that pressing good works, should be the constant subject of Christian teaching. To confirm this sense of the passage, the authority of great critics agrees with the context. *Erasmus* renders the verse, "Fidus sermo, et de *his* volo, ut confirmes, *quo* "*solliciti sint*, ut bonis operibus presint." *Junius & Tremellius*, "Fidus est sermo, et in his volo, ut ita quoque "confirmes eos, *ut solliciti sint* ad faciendum bona opera." *Schoetgenius in Pasorem*, ἵνα "proprié notat causam fina-

But how false is all this, if they are above common comprehension? if a life acceptable to our Maker, can be supported without their aid; or if *only* pressing upon men the necessity of moral practice, be the most effectual way to produce good works?

Added to the guilt of opposing the judgment of CHRIST, of his apostles, and an ex-

"lem." And the *French* versions render this conjunction by *a sinque*. Indeed the context will agree with no other sense. For to give greater weight to the command, these things which *Titus* was charged to affirm constantly, are said "to be good and profitable unto men." Now to understand *good works* by these things, not the *doctrines* beforenamed, will make the sense extremely flat, and the assertion ablolutely needless. for whoever doubted whether *good* works were "*good* and profitable "unto men?" But that these doctrines are so, the world hath in all ages vehemently denied, and reproached them as most unfriendly to virtuous practice. A divine declaration, therefore, in their favour, was highly necessary. Besides, the *opposition* between doctrines "good and profitable unto men," and vain and foolish questions, with the command to reject *heretics*, in the context, proves the inspired Apostle is speaking of those doctrines only, which are highly instrumental in promoting Christian practice, and not of Christian practice itself.

press command to preach these doctrines, all who neglect them in zeal for pressing moral practice, are chargeable with defeating one grand end of the Christian ministry, which is, to expound the scripture. Our business is to *collect* the various testimonies scattered through the sacred volume, in order to prove more fully the capital truths of the Christian faith, and throw a light and beauty upon many otherwise obscure parts, till the scripture itself becomes a book of great instruction, support, consolation and delight to the people. On the Christian doctrines all the other parts of scripture have dependance; and a connection with them as an exemplification of their truth; so that they serve, when understood, as a key to explain the *whole* which relates to spiritual life and godliness. But no lectures which confine our attention to the practice of moral righteousness *only* can afford the least help to understand those scripture-passages, which want explanation. On the contrary, men learn to contract from this method a *dislike* to the Bible, for speaking so emphatically a language quite opposite to the sufficiency of

good works, which they hear constantly extolled. When all share in the grand business of justifying a sinner before GOD is taken from works, and the whole glory ascribed to CHRIST:—when supreme love of Him, even to losing our life for his sake, is exacted with all authority, under penalty of being accursed and destroyed for ever, if we do not thus love Him. And when so much stress is laid upon faith in Him as the radical grace, from which alone all goodness can grow; these scriptures must be heard with jealousy and great offence, after we have long been told, the stress of our salvation is to be laid *on our own goodness*, independent of any affection to a crucified Redeemer. At best, all scriptures of this import, must appear strange and unintelligible. And when good works are thus laid as the *ground of our hope* towards GOD, the nature and desert of sin cannot be seen or believed, as the scripture represents them both; because in this case, the best works we can perform, are of no more weight against our guilt, than the genteel address of an assassin, is to atone for his atrocious crimes. But slight thoughts

of sin must cause the scripture to appear greatly exceptionable; in denouncing the penalty of death as the wages of *every* transgression;—in the judgment already executed upon offenders, which it records, and the tremendous doom reserved for them in the eternal world. These things will ever appear contrary to our ideas of goodness and justice, till we have greatly humbled ourselves before GOD, as creatures exceedingly guilty; which never will be effected by exalting the *worth* of our own duties.

After strong prejudices, therefore, against several parts of scripture on these accounts, have brooded some time in our minds, the natural relief for persons so disgusted with the book, is to listen to, and cherish objections against its divine authority, till they become covert, if not avowed infidels: for it is an easy and natural transition, from violent disgust against the book, to wish it was an imposition, and then to treat it as one. So *injurious* to divine revelation, in the conclusion, is a rash zeal for pressing the practice of good works, in neglect of Christian doctrine.

It is no less injurious to the very cause it means to serve: for the peculiar doctrines which CHRIST and his apostles taught, and all succeeding pastors are charged to maintain, have this honor put upon them, because the evidence of their truth is found in the necessities of our natural condition, and are most affecting to every individual, *as soon as he comes to the knowledge of himself*, whether he hath received the improvements of education, or cannot tell one letter from another. A brief review of the principal doctrines of CHRIST, will prove this.

What object can you place before men, more likely to impress them, than an immortal spirit in a state of ruin? "Foolish, dis-"obedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and "pleasures, living in malice and envy," and on account of such depravity, become hateful even to the wise and good GOD. Yet the *whole* of this depravity, is manifest in the purpose, tempers, pursuits, and pleasures of men in all stations, and of every age, till they are renewed in the spirit of their mind. Consequently this black indictment, faithfully drawn up, and proved by two infallible

witnesses, scripture and matter of fact, will, as far as argument can, excite men earnestly to seek deliverance from a condition so infamous and guilty;—it will work upon them, either to turn away in a rage, from the faithful glass, which shews them their own features; or to humble themselves in a full confession of all their misery before GOD, with unfeigned desire to walk in newness of life.

Again; What argument so likely to affect the giddy and the gay, the rich and high-minded; awakening even them to serious consideration, as a *whole world* of condemned malefactors;—condemned for breaking a law of most benevolent intention, of consummate excellence, enacted by highest authority: the penalty for which transgression is, and ought to be, extremely great, even the curse of GOD. The nature and end of law, in every nation under heaven, and the known condition of all capital offenders convicted by it, join aid with scripture-doctrine, to help our dull conceptions of the consequences of our sin. In which case one, as well as another, can perceive, that due care ought to be taken to demonstrate, it is

not from slight thoughts of sin, that GOD receives any of us to mercy; due care that his justice and purity should be fully manifested in the punishment of sin, lest the favor of forgiveness should be deemed a little matter, and wantonly abused. But from this obvious consideration, salvation by CHRIST *alone* is calculated to strike the mind as the wisdom and power of GOD.

With respect also to the person of CHRIST, and his office, what circumstance is there, that the people cannot comprehend? When the prophet saith, "Behold your GOD shall "come with vengeance, even GOD with a "recompence, He shall come and save you; "all who are weak and fearful of heart, lest "they should be lost," (whom these words address) will clearly perceive the suitableness, the great value of the promise, and long for its accomplishment. And when the Savior is called "Light of the world, Prince "of peace, Emmanuel," the sound is joyful, the condescension amazing, and the benefit it encourages us to expect, most welcome to every one who desires peace and communion with GOD.

Above all, the grand central truth of the Bible, *the eternal redemption of the Church*, is formed from our very constitution to strike us, as soon as it is proposed and believed, above every other argument. Even an enormous offender *dying* under the hands of justice, is a powerful preacher against his own crimes, to a thousand spectators. His end will draw attention from young and old, rich and poor, who would sleep over every exhortation to obey the laws, without such an example of justice before their eyes. The *death* of an innocent man, of a martyr, is still more interesting. But a father, affected as *David* was for his rebellious *Absalom*; and not only *willing* to give up his own life a substitute for his abandoned offspring, but actually expiring a sacrifice for them, excites the tenderest emotions the heart can feel.—We should even be reproached as wanting in humanity itself, did we not passionately admire such a character. From these instances, judge what must be the impression, when the Maker of all things saith, "Lo, I come; (a "body hast thou prepared me,) to die for the "ungodly, for sinners, for enemies." When

this fact is believed and realized to the mind; love and adoration, and zeal to please such an unparalleled benefactor, springs up ;—a Lawgiver higher than the heavens, purging away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, that his people might be saved, and the law receive no dishonor *.

* A very remarkable fact in the life of *Lycurgus*, Prince of *Sparta*, proves what strong impressions, sufferings endured for our benefit naturally make upon us. When *Lycurgus* attempted to bring about an equal division of the *Spartan* lands, the very first proposal met with so violent an opposition from the men of property, that a fray ensued, in which *Lycurgus* lost *one* of his eyes. *The people, struck with the sight of the blood of their admired lawgiver*, seized the offender, one *Alcander* by name, and gave him up to be punished at discretion. *Lycurgus*, with the greatest generosity, freely forgave him : for which *Alcander* instantly admired and loved him ; became his warmest friend, and greatest advocate with the men of property, who opposed his designs.

If the loss of one member of the body only, in a noble contention for the welfare of the republic, wrought thus powerfully on the people, and on *Alcander* himself, when forgiven his offence, we are not to wonder at that saying, "And I, if I be lifted up, *will draw all men unto me.*" It was spoken from a thorough knowledge of human nature, no less than the irreversible purpose of his own mind.

The rich blessings also which are purchased by this bleeding oblation on the cross, with the godlike manner of their conveyance, are formed to win the heart. Forgiveness of sins, peace with GOD, free access to Him, as his adopted children; the pleasures of a holy life; hope abounding in the midst of trials; victory over death; a resurrection of the body to glory; the sight of GOD as He is, and the eternal enjoyment of Him in heaven. All these blessings, offered without money, and without price, to every one that thirsteth for salvation, however deeply he may have plunged himself in guilt, are glad tidings, extorting that exclamation, "LORD, what is "man! that thou so regardest him?" These things are calculated to put all the powers of the soul into motion, because they are infinitely grand, interesting, and desirable.

But should there be no spark of ingenuity in our breast, to kindle at such an object as a compassionate, dying, crucified Redeemer, and the unsearchable riches of his grace; should nothing but fear and terror be able to awaken and alarm; what will you name

equal to the second appearance of this rejected, despised, injured Lamb of GOD, as it was presented in vision to his beloved disciple?

"I saw," he says, "a great white throne, "and Him that sat on it; before whose face "the earth and the heaven fled away, and "there was no place found for them. And "I saw the dead, small and great, stand be-"fore GOD; and the books were opened and "another book was opened, which is the book "of life; and the dead were judged out of "those things which were written in the "books, according to their works. And the "sea gave up the dead which were in it; and "death and hell delivered up the dead which "were in them; and they were judged every "man according to their works," *Rev.* xx.

*Then* (in the words of a spirited writer) "the intemperate gratifications of corrupt "men, their impure indulgencies, the ruin "of the innocence, peace, and usefulness of "those whom they have made subservient to "their pleasure, ambition, and avarice, shall "be recalled to their remembrance; shall "appear in all their dreadful circumstances

" of aggravation, and receive from the Judge
" the due recompence of divine vengeance.
" *Then* neither titles of honor, possessions,
" family connections, nor any advantages
" they can here boast, shall avail in the least
" to ward off the sentence of the impartial
" Judge, or shelter them from the stroke of
" that almighty arm, which shall be lifted up
" against them. *Then* the eternal conse-
" quences of divine anger shall pursue their
" crimes. " The Redeemer Himself shall
" pronounce them *accursed.* Heaven shall
" reject, and for ever close its gates against
" them. They shall be forsaken of GOD.
" shunned by his holy angels, avoided by all
" the wise, the religious, the recovered part
" of mankind, as contagion itself, and mark-
" ed out as vessels of wrath, endured with
" with much long-suffering, and fitted for de-
" struction. *Then* that faith, piety, and virtue,
" which they wickedly despised, shall appear
" to be the only distinctions of mankind,
" which GOD regards, and the sole qualifi-
" cations for eternal happiness.—*Then* the
" followers of CHRIST in all the excellencies
" of the Christian life and character, shall be

" owned as the only genuine children of " wisdom; shall obtain the approbation of " heaven and earth, and be accounted worthy " through the all-powerful merits and inter- " cession of CHRIST, to obtain eternal life " and glory."

There can be no greater mistake, therefore, if we really mean to promote the practice of good works, than to omit, or but slightly mention such subjects as these, in order to lecture upon some single duty, recommending it as amiable and excellent, or painting the conduct opposite to it, as base and hurtful. *These subjects*, either to gain attention, or rouse the soul to action, compared with the Fall, the Redemption, the Eternal Judgment, are weak as the sound of a whisper to the trump of GOD.

This mistake is *injurious* also to the practice of good works in another way, although it expresses so much zeal for them. The chief hindrance to a good life, is pride of heart, which sets us above regarding the known dictates of any superior, and the affectionate counsel even of our best friend; whilst it leads us extravagantly to over-rate

the least degree of obedience we find ourselves inclined to pay; and renders us most of all averse to confess our deserts, and our debt to GOD for his mercies. From men it makes us expect much, and ready to take offence if it is not paid us to the full measure of what we imagine to be our due. Wherefore, till this inbred worst distemper of the mind is subdued, there can be *no success* in pressing the observance of duty. But in order to put men out of conceit with themselves, the most effectual way is not to prove the reasonableness, excellency, or necessity of good works, or the iniquity of this or that particular vice. This will have little effect in comparison of a direct attack upon human pride, by strong proofs from scripture and matter of fact, that so far from having any reason to think well of ourselves, every individual, till renewed in the spirit of his mind, is a despiser of the authority and excellency of GOD; a vile ingrate towards Him; an opposer of his government;— consequently a compound of qualities so odious, that no one upon earth was ever abandoned enough to speak a word in their defence. It is *all*

this heavy charge of guilt and depravity, brought home to the conscience, not *some* particular instance of disobedience, which confounds the pride, or fires the resentment of sinners,—which provokes them to contradict and blaspheme the scripture-doctrine, or stops their mouth, exciting in them earnest prayer for deliverance from such a state of wickedness. Only keep out of sight the *whole* of our vileness, and we can easily bear reproach of conscience for being guilty in many things:—but when this is proved to our conviction, there can be no peace till we become Christians altogether.

Further; By dwelling *only* on plain, practical subjects, we necessarily confine men's attention to particular duties, instead of laying before them the spiritual Law of GOD, and its demands; by which omission, self-complacency is flattered in those who observe the single duty we press upon them, or are free from the particular vice we condemn; and thus slaves to sin of every denomination, find in turn something to make them easy, or give them pleasure. Prove the necessity of temperance and chastity, many of a vile co-

vetous spirit, will think themselves sufficiently virtuous, because they are neither drunken nor lewd. Dwell on the necessity of justice and integrity in all our dealings, many of the vain and proud, of the intemperate or debauched, will bless themselves, that they are very honest men. Expose fashionable vices, those who have escaped them through mere prudence, not any sense of duty to GOD, will conclude their state is safe and good. Exhort to the diligent practice of devotion, and proud formalists will trust still more in a round of religious duties, and despise others. In short, *all* will retain their original good opinion of themselves, because, though condemned in some respects, their neighbors are so too; no one lives without faults, and they, as well as others, have their virtues*.

* Every body has heard of Him, who made no other use of the Whole Duty of Man, than to point out the faults of his neighbors, by affixing their names in the margin, opposite to the vice the author condemns. This is done much oftener in the heart, than is commonly supposed, when particular branches of duty are enlarged on, without some check upon our natural spirit of self-preference.

But no room is left for this false conclusion; nothing to feed vanity of mind, on account of freedom from this or that particular vice, or the practice of this or that virtue, when *Christian doctrines* are urged to enforce good works. Since from these doctrines it is a truth indisputable, that in in our first estate we are all vile and lost,—all concluded under sin; and are delivered out of it (if indeed delivered) "not by works of right-"eousness which we have done," but by mere mercy, through the atonement and righteousness of GOD our Savior; and after deliverance from it, can never say with truth, we are accepted for our own goodness. Self-complacency, therefore, the great hindrance to proficiency in obedience, is mortified by these considerations to the last hour of life, even in the midst of the most active zeal to honor GOD, and manifest good-will to all men.

Should it be said, Care may certainly be taken, so to press obedience without partiality, and without hypocrisy, as to prevent every abuse, and all self-exaltation.—I answer, if Christian doctrines be omitted, one

capital defect must still remain, which will always prevent success; because no proof of the excellency or necessity of good works, independent of Christian principles, however guarded, can give men the *encouragement* they need, or direct them how to obtain *power* to do their duty. Little indeed is known of our condition, by those who think we want to be told, our life and practice ought to be very different from what it is. Supreme love to GOD, and good behavior to every one, all allow is our bounden duty. But unbelief, pride, self-love, desire of gain, preferment, and distinction; love of praise, with the strong impulse of sensual appetites, make this confession affect us very slightly, and prove an effectual obstruction in the way of our duty. Hence the contrary spirit, to that of love either to GOD or man, hath ruled the human species ever since the fall, when left to themselves, not from ignorance that it is evil, but from want of a determined will to cleave to that which is good. Find out a way, therefore, to dethrone these tyrant-passions, good works will follow of course. "When thou "hast set my heart at liberty, I will run the

"way of thy commandments." On the contrary, to press the necessity of moral practice, without first giving plain and full directions how to master these grand impediments to well-doing, is no better than reading our sentence of condemnation. What we all want, is power to surmount the difficulties we have to contend with, and assurance of its vouchsafement; not taken for granted, but established upon strong foundations, sufficient to remove natural distrust, and painful doubts about this matter. Was not such assurance absolutely necessary to secure the practice of good works, why are promises of aid, support, consolation, and final victory, given and repeated so often, so solemnly to the faithful? Why is there any thing more in the Bible than a clear definition of our duty, and revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments? But no such assurance of power, arises from the strongest proof of the excellency or necessity of good works. Till the Christian doctrine of the success of faith in CHRIST, his love, the power of the holy Ghost, and the engagements of the new Covenant, are proved, explained, and ap-

plied, the rule of duty, excellent as it is, will not be found practicable by us. To the command of GOD, there must be added his kind exhortations, and endearing promises. We must be assured, "He giveth power to the "faint, and to them that have no might, He "increaseth strength: is nigh unto all them "that call upon Him, and will fulfil the de-"sire of them them that fear Him." An advocate for sinners must be set before us in such a captivating point of view, as the apostle describes him to the church, to inspire hope, that our petitions will certainly prosper: "Seeing then we have a great high "priest, that is passed into the heavens, JE-"SUS, the Son of GOD; let us hold fast "our profession. For we have not an high "priest which cannot be touched with a "feeling of our infirmities; but was in all "points tempted like as we are, yet with-"out sin. Let us, therefore, come *boldly* "to the throne of grace, that we may obtain "mercy, and find grace to help in time of "need," *Heb.* iv.

When these arguments and motives are pressed, not only is support given to the

weak, and comfort to the dejected; but every worker of iniquity is self-condemned, and left absolutely without excuse, for not calling on the same LORD over all, "who is "rich in mercy to all that call on him: for "whosoever calleth on the name of the "LORD, shall be saved."

Such proclamations of help and power from above, are not only necessary for all, as motives and arguments to abound in the practice of good works, but *more evidently* still in their case, who have been long *accustomed* to do evil, and made themselves tenfold more the children of hell, than they were before. Persons of this black character, oftener than is commonly supposed, despair of ever being better. Their long-indulged passions, stronger than iron fetters, bind them in the house of their prison. They are falling victims to love of liquor, or vile lewdness, though temporal ruin and death stare them in the face. Led captive, and borne down by impetuous passions, in vain withstood in their own strength, how do tradesmen lie and defraud: the poor steal and pilfer; the covetous oppress, the pas-

sionate quarrel, and men in general vex and devour one another! Out of this multitude some are recovered: their life, their mind is changed. But this marvellous transformation is always brought about in a way which clearly proves, that much more than the knowledge of our duty, is necessary to make us perform it. Such converts to CHRIST and righteousness, are first heavy laden with their sins, and so grievously feel their own inability to cast away their transgressions, that they cry unto the LORD day and night for mercy and for power. Their state is drawn to the life in those remarkable words: "When the "poor and needy seek for water, and there "is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst. "Then the LORD saith, I will hear them, I "the GOD of *Israel* will not forsake them," *Isai.* xlvii. 17.

From hence we may account for a very surprising fact; I mean, that some of the most profligate on earth, during great part of their lives, far exceed afterwards in the excellency of their practice, and the good example they set, even many who have served the LORD from their youth up. The reason

is, their helplessness and misery have been more deeply felt; their prayers for deliverance, and some suitable return for such mercy, more fervent and persevering; their salvation is astonishing to themselves, and their sensibility of that adorable grace, to which they owe it all, quick and permanent.

This change, evident in the most extraordinary converts through every age of the church, fully proves, that the most effectual way to promote good works, is *not* only or principally to show they are excellent or necessary; but on the contrary, to fix *conviction* on the unbelieving and impenitent, that they *are as wicked and base,* as the word of GOD affirms them to be; as much *need* his power to help them, and importunate prayer for it, as the scripture teaches; and may be absolutely certain, that when they implore pardon and strength, in and through CHRIST, they shall be saved. The very worst of men in this way, and in no other, have been converted, made wise, and just, and good, and holy;—whilst the most decent and regular, by denying their own weakness and guilt;

by presuming they needed no deep humiliation for sin, or cleansing in the fountain opened for it, go on till death, self-exalted, unchanged, unforgiven. In one case, we see, in the strongest light, excellent fruit from deep conviction of sinfulness and helplessness: in the other, a fair exterior, and regular deportment, prove the greatest hindrance to self-knowledge, to faith in CHRIST, to real prayer, and abounding in every good work. In both the truth of scripture appears, that "PRIDE always goes before de-"struction;" and before honor in the sight of GOD, humility.

When this neglect of Christian doctrines, pregnant with so many evils, has been justly condemned and censured, the general reply from those who allow they are intelligible by the poor, is, that we ought in charity to take it for granted these doctrines are known and believed;—and for this reason there is no occasion to *teach them constantly.*

What! take it for granted, against the evidence of our senses, and daily observation? Take it for granted, when the very

means of Christian instruction are so notoriously neglected, and even despised? Do the poor know and believe any of the Articles of the Christian Creed, when almost without exception they plead their condition in excuse for the grossest ignorance, with no less confidence, than if GOD had declared, He would allow the plea? Do men engrossed in following their trade, their farms, and their merchandize, understand and believe these doctrines, without the least application to their Bible, or fervent prayer, or feeling of the infinite importance of things spiritual and unseen? Can schoolmasters, if religiously disposed themselves, do more in general than hear their scholars repeat the Catechism by rote, which may be done in perfect ignorance of *all* it means? Or in universities, is Christian religion the science which students are called upon in any degree to regard?

Unless, therefore, the Pulpit is employed constantly to supply the guilty neglect of the vast multitudes of parents ignorant and profane in educating their children, and the deplorable defects of schools and colleges,

it seems hardly possible, humanly speaking, that we should be more than nominal Christians; so far from discerning the excellency and end of the faith and hope of the Gospel, as not even to know what they mean; be perfectly satisfied with ourselves if we do no harm; and think we are Christians to all intents and purposes, if we are but good members of society.

Let us now sum up the several evil effects which have been proved natural consequences of dwelling on the practice of good works, in neglect of Christian doctrines. It makes the most important part of the Bible appear of little use; contradicts the judgment of CHRIST and his Apostles; and their express command to teach these sacred truths. It defeats one great end of the Christian ministry, which is to expound the scripture; leads men into such unscriptural notions, as makes them first to dislike, and at last reject the Bible. It keeps out of sight the most efficacious motives to abound in good works; gratifies pride, excites to odious comparisons, and passes over in silence those beneficent proclamations of help and power from above,

without which no man is sufficient to walk in obedience before GOD.

In answer to this charge, I am sensible, some will reply,—not less evil, as history attests, are the consequences of insisting continually on Grace, the precious promises, and Covenant, the righteousness and merits of CHRIST, and other comfortable doctrines. Have they not created in wicked men a detestable persumption of being saved? Have they not been so taught, as to inspire even a contempt for good works, and make every social virtue appear a low attainment; and earnest seeking to keep the commandments, a thing derogatory to the glory of *free grace*, by which we are accepted in the Beloved? What can be more pernicious than these effects?

It is granted, one extreme is no *less fatal* than the other. It is granted, moral practice must be urged, and insisted on with all authority, in its proper place and connection, no less than the articles of faith. Nothing but Antinomian phrenzy ever can lead men to be shy of allowing, of earnestly contending for this. But the important point of dif-

ference between the world and the church of CHRIST, lies *in the means* which are to be used to secure the practice of good works, and their value when performed. Pagan philosophers, mere moralists, and those who think with them, will have the fruit without the tree; good practice without Christian principles, from mere resolution of mind, from approbation of virtue, and determined purpose to attain future happiness. The universal church hath always taught, that knowledge of CHRIST, love of his name, and the power of the holy Ghost, are previously requisite, before we can lead a Christian life; that these things must be proved, explained, applied, as most efficacious to win over the alienated heart to delight in GOD, and regulate the whole man according to his will. On this foundation, the whole building of Christian graces is to rise, to the comfort of the believer, the benefit of all in connection with him, and the glory of GOD. The sacred Oracles teach us, knowledge must go before faith;—conviction of impending ruin for sin, and de-

liverance from it, before supreme love to CHRIST, without which there can be no humble universal obedience, or good works well-pleasing in the sight of GOD.

From these testimonies the conclusion cannot be invalidated, that the great essential doctrines which ministers are constantly to teach, must be the very same as were taught by the Apostles themselves, under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of truth, when they first published the Gospel to the world, and laid the foundation of the Christian church; not such as moral philosophers, or those who think with them, insist on, to the great disparagement of the faith and hope of the Gospel.

THE END.

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